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# Huskers Illustrated

Volume 26, No. 6

JUNE/JULY 2006 • \$7.95

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# Huskers Illustrated

JUNE/JULY 2006 • Volume 26, No. 6

## 2006 FOOTBALL YEARBOOK

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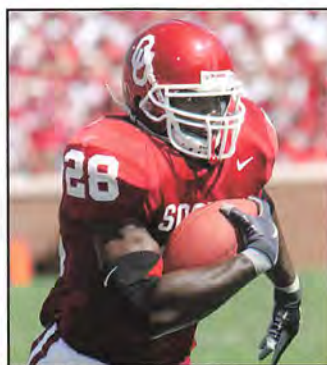


### ON THE COVER



This year's cover features defensive end Adam Carriker (90) and center Kurt Mann (50), the two linemen with the most starting experience. Below them is the new addition at the

north end of Memorial Stadium. Cover photos and design by Scott Bruhn.





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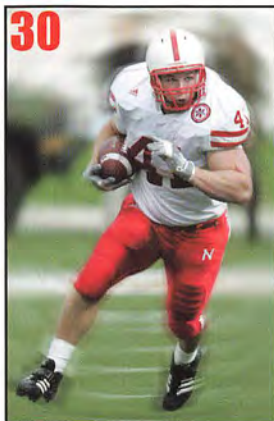
# POSITION-BY-POSITION



**QUARTERBACK**



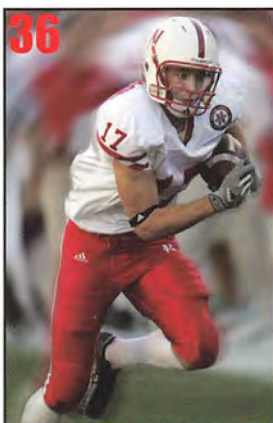
**RUNNING BACK**



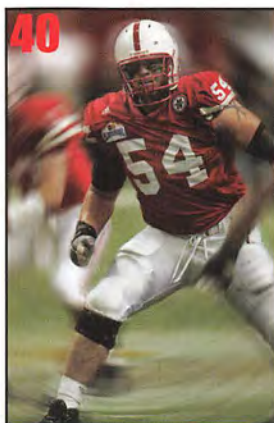
**FULLBACK**



**TIGHT END**



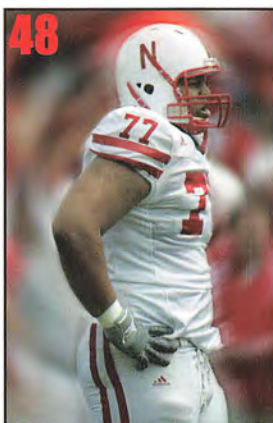
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**OFFENSIVE LINE**



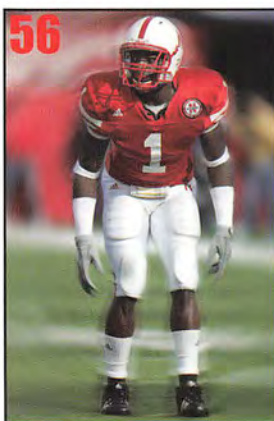
**DEFENSIVE END**



**DEFENSIVE TACKLE**



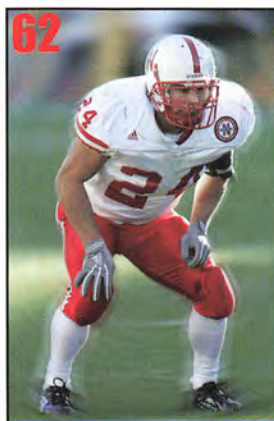
**LINEBACKER**



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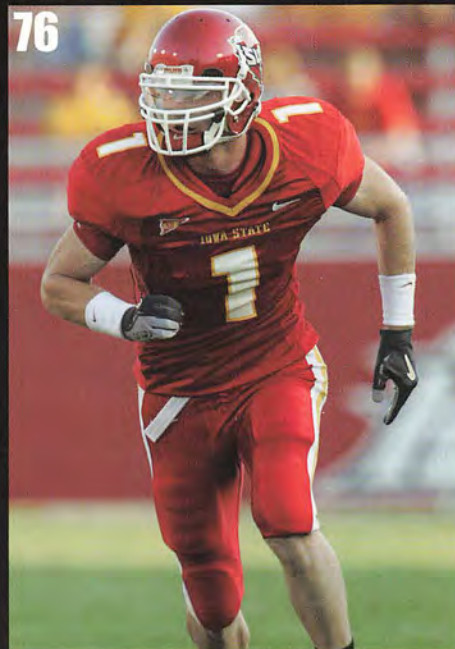


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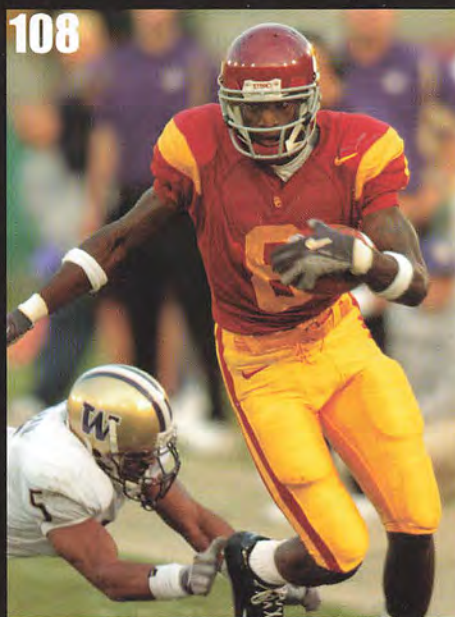
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## Is NU Going To Kansas City?

*Huskers ready to move into their new digs in preparation for 2006 season*



**Brian Hill**

WHEN WE LAST saw Louisiana Tech, it was Aug. 29, 1998, Game 1 of the Frank Solich era.

Nebraska's first play was a fullback trap. Joel Makovicka ran off right guard for a 12-yard gain, according to Mike Babcock's "Game Recap" in the following issue of *Huskers Illustrated*.

Nebraska, coming off its third national championship in the last four seasons of Tom Osborne's coaching career, would lead 35-6 at halftime. But it wasn't going to be that easy.

Louisiana Tech quarterback Tim Rattay would complete 46-of-68 passes in that season-opener for an amazing 590 yards, and the Bulldogs' record-setting day would include wide receiver Troy Edwards catching 21 of those passes for 405 yards and three touchdowns. NU still won 56-27, but the second half was more than a little disconcerting to Husker Nation.

Eight years later, the Bulldogs from Rustin, La., are back as the opponent in the Sept. 2 opener at newly refurbished Memorial Stadium. If you look closely at the artwork on the cover of our 2006 Football Yearbook, you can see scaffolding still in place as workers began to put the finishing touches on the \$50-million Stadium Expansion Project. The Huskers were scheduled to move to their new locker room in the Tom and Nancy Osborne Complex in late July.

The stadium addition is only one part of the many changes in the Nebraska football program in recent years. What's it been like for the players involved? Many of them talk about it in this issue of *Huskers Illustrated*, our annual Football Yearbook.

In addition to a view of the stadium project, our cover features the players with the most starting experience on the offensive and defensive lines — center

Kurt Mann and defensive end Adam Carriker, a pair of seniors who have a combined 43 starts. The skill position players often get the most publicity, but the play of the lines will go a long way toward determining how Year 3 of the Bill Callahan era plays out.

Even though this issue is the Football Yearbook, we included an update on the Nebraska baseball team, whose season might well have extended past the printing time for this annual edition. It didn't.

Except for an impressive showing in the Big 12 Tournament — the Huskers lost to Kansas 9-7 in the title game — timely hits were hard to come by down the stretch. Nebraska, the No. 6 national seed, went two-and-out in the Lincoln Regional to finish 42-17. It was certainly a good season, but it didn't end well.



The 2005 football season certainly did end well. A three-game winning streak, capped by the bizarre 32-28 victory over Michigan in the Alamo Bowl, has elevated optimism entering another new season. NU is drawing support as the favorite to represent the North Division in the Big 12 Championship game Dec. 2 in Kansas City. You can check out the forecasts of a number of members of the media in "Here's Why" on Page 10. Most predict a finish of 9-5 or better.

The Huskers can show they're ready for prime time when they meet USC on a national stage (ABC) at 7 p.m. (CDT) Sept. 16 at the historic Los Angeles Coliseum. That's just part of a long and winding road that should lead to Kansas City ... and beyond.

On that note, we'll borrow the old CB Radio line and say "10-4." ■

### NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of *Huskers Illustrated* (Volume 26, No. 7) is scheduled to mail the week of Aug. 21. Check for updates at [www.huskersillustrated.com](http://www.huskersillustrated.com).

## Huskers Illustrated

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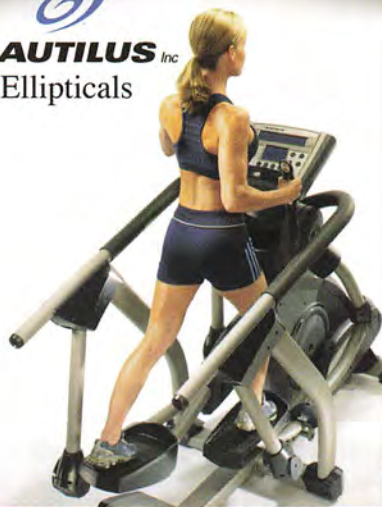
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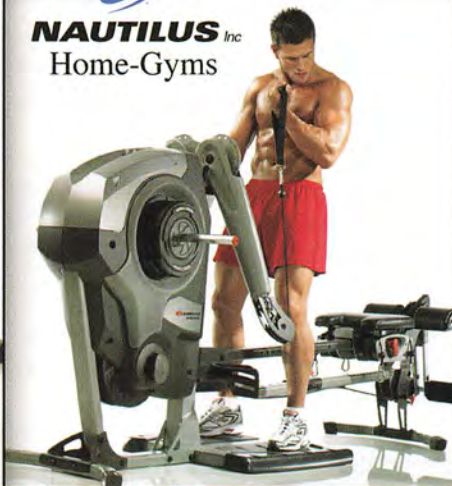


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## Room To Run?

*The ground game wasn't what it needs to be, but the Huskers picked up the pace down the stretch*



**Mike BABCOCK**

ABERRATION OR TREND? You be the judge.

Seven of 11 NCAA Division I-A players who have rushed for 2,000 or more yards in a season played for teams in the current Big 12. Oklahoma State's Barry Sanders heads the list, with 2,628 yards in 1988. Nebraska's Mike Rozier, the second to make the list (Southern California's Marcus Allen was the first), is still fifth — and he is among five of the 11 who won Heisman Trophies for their efforts.

Given that tradition, last season's conference rushing statistics could be considered out of the ordinary. Only three players rushed for 1,000 or more yards, and two of the three were quarterbacks now departed: Missouri's Brad Smith, the league's rushing leader, and Texas's Vince Young. Oklahoma's Adrian Peterson was the only conference running back to gain 1,000 yards.

What's the conference coming to? This is football for Pete's sake.

Aberration or trend? You be the judge.

Nebraska's Cory Ross was fifth in the Big 12 in rushing yards, or sixth in rushing yards per game, with 882. The last time the Cornhuskers' leading rusher had fewer yards was in 1998, when Correll Buckhalter gained 799 — on 83 fewer carries than the workhorse Ross had last season.

Workhorse? He had half of Nebraska's carries and three-fourths of its rushing yards.

The Cornhuskers rushed for 1,152 yards to rank last in the conference and 107th out of 117 Division I-A teams, averaging 96 yards per game on the ground and 2.7 yards per carry. To put those statistics in some manner of context requires a brief lesson in Nebraska football history.

George Clark — nicknamed "Potsy" — is unique among Cornhusker coaches. He held the job twice, in 1945 and again in 1948, after two seasons under Bernie Masterson. Clark's 1948 team, with talent depleted by World War II, won only twice in 10 games in the first year of the Big Seven Conference. Tom Novak earned first-team all-conference honors, and Clete Fischer was the leading rusher.

Fischer gained 308 yards and scored four touchdowns on 74 carries. The team's rushing total was 1,006 yards. That's the last time the Cornhuskers rushed for fewer yards than in 2005. And until last season they hadn't averaged fewer than 100 rushing yards since records were first maintained in 1946.

Though the comparison is little more than a curiosity given changes in the game over 60 years, it can be used to underscore Nebraska's need for an improved running game.

Aberration or trend? You be the judge.

That the Cornhuskers finished 8-4 without a consistent ground game is remarkable, a tribute to coach Bill Callahan's offensive mind, his ability to figuratively extract blood from a turnip. Only two other I-A teams averaged fewer than 100 rushing yards per game and won more often than they lost: South Carolina (7-5) and Florida State (8-4). The remaining eight teams were a combined 18-72.

Nebraska's running game was at its worst during consecutive losses against Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas. The Cornhuskers rushed for a combined 35 yards on 76 carries in those games.

Kansas and Oklahoma were among the nation's best at stopping the run. But Missouri's run defense was suspect — to be kind. And Nebraska rushed for a net of minus-2 yards against the Tigers.

The Cornhuskers picked up the pace down the stretch. "We ran the ball well against Michigan in the bowl game," Callahan said during the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference. "We really focused on running the ball in the bowl game and we had good balance in that respect."

The "good balance" was 151 yards rushing and 167 passing. Plus, the running game "provided some big plays at the tail end," said Callahan. Among those big plays was a 31-yard touchdown run by Ross, which, with a two-point conversion, cut the deficit to 28-25 with 8:08 remaining.

Callahan's expectations are modest by the standard to which older Nebraska fans became accustomed when the Cornhuskers led the nation in rushing on a seemingly annual basis. In an apparent concession to that tradition, the term "I-back" has been retained, even though the offensive philosophy hasn't. The generic "running back" would seem to be a more appropriate description.

Callahan and running backs coach Randy Jordan talk about the need for "efficient" runs. "We're not looking for 80 (yards)," Callahan said. "We're just looking for 4." In the spring, Jordan told running back Marlon Lucky: "The first thing is, you get me my 4 yards and then the rest is yours."

Aberration or trend? You be the judge.

There would seem to be a correlation between running the ball and winning. Texas ranked second in the nation in rushing, on the way to winning the BCS national championship. And the Longhorns defeated USC, which ranked sixth in rushing, in the title game.

Aberration or trend? You be the judge. ■



**Cory Ross had 151 yards rushing in the Alamo Bowl.**

*Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 25 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.*



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## Proud Conference

*The Big 12 flexed its muscle against nonconference opponents*



**Curt McKEEVER**

NATURALLY, THE BIG 12 likes to brag that in five of the past six seasons it's had a league member playing for the national championship.

And Texas did the conference proud last January by beating Southern Cal in the Rose Bowl to earn its first national title since 1970. Hats off to the 'Horns, but the real mark of the Big 12's overall muscle was evidenced far outside the Pasadena city limits.

For starters, last year the league went 36-8 in nonconference games, a record that represented the fewest losses in the Big 12's 10 seasons.

The conference then went 5-3 in bowl games, which tied it with the ACC for the best winning percentage among the 11 NCAA Division IA leagues.

Five North Division teams played in bowls. Only one other time (South, 2004) had the Big 12 sent that many from one division.

Now, the conference has renewed four-year contracts with the Fiesta, Cotton, Holiday, Alamo, Houston and Independence Bowls. It's also added to that lineup the Insight, Gator and Sun. With each of the latter two games, the Big 12 can't be represented more than twice over the four years. Still, that gives the league nine possible slots.

If you're one of the head coaches, it's got to be scary to think the Big 12 could improve on last year. At some point, there has to be a cap, right?

"This league is so special," said Iowa State's Dan McCarney, preparing for his 12th season. "These are great opportunities and great challenges for every team and coach."

So it's possible the Big 12 couldn't be in any better shape as it begins its second decade, which means the team that reaches the top of it in 2006 should be in position for the usual reward that comes with that spot.

Here's a glance at how close the schools other than Nebraska are to challenging for the Big 12 crown:

**Baylor:** In 2005, the Bears notched two Big 12 wins for the first time, and their five total victories were the most since the '95 team won seven. Guy Morriss is hoping a new spread offense installed in the spring will keep the nation's premier punter, Daniel Sepulveda, from being so active.

**Colorado:** Gary Barnett is out, Dan Hawkins in. The past five seasons at Boise State, Hawkins' high-scoring offense helped him win 53 of 64 games. The Buffaloes will have to find a quarterback to replace Joel Klatt and have some fast development from the offensive line if they expect to be in a fifth Big 12 title game in the last six years.

"People ask us to put a term to our offense, and I say, 'Just score,'" Hawkins said. "... Gary Barnett, and the way he ran things here, gives you a chance to have winning football teams."

**Iowa State:** The 2005 Cyclones lost three overtime games, and for the second straight year dropped an extra-session regular-season finale contest that would have put them in the Big

12 championship. They'll miss two key defensive players removed from the team during the offseason — linebacker Matt Robertson and end Jason Berryman.

**Kansas:** The Jayhawks played in their second bowl game in three seasons, and expect to be in good hands with quarterback Kerry Meier. Never mind that all three starting linebackers from one of the league's best defenses have all graduated.

**Kansas State:** Former Virginia offensive coordinator Ron Prince has the difficult task of following Bill Snyder (not to mention an early season game against Louisville). At least the Wildcats are coming off a season in which they failed to become bowl eligible.

"I come from a school of coaches who have specific plans to put things together," Prince said. "We want coaches of tremendous ambition and coaches who can teach players. You have a group people who see themselves as partners in an organization."



**Mack Brown and Texas are ready to defend the title.**

**Missouri:** Like Kansas, the Tigers have been in a bowl two of the past three years. Their rally from 21 points down to South Carolina in the Independence Bowl can't hurt the transition of going from Brad Smith to Chase Daniel at quarterback.

**Oklahoma:** The Sooners led the Big 12 in total defense last year and coach Bob Stoops sounds like he expects a repeat.

"We're confident, defensively, at all positions," Stoops said. Same at quarterback with Rhett Bomar. He and the defense ought to get a good early test against Oregon.

**Oklahoma State:** A 4-7 season under first-year coach Mike Gundy was evidence of how far the Cowboys have to go before they are to contend again. In quarterback Bobby Reid they have the difference-maker to expedite that process.

**Texas:** Vince Young has taken his game to the NFL, leaving the Longhorns with untested talent behind center. Another early game against Ohio State should loom large.

"Our guys did not come out of the national championship game complacent. We had our toughest spring we have had since I've been at Texas," coach Mack Brown said. "... We emphasize that it's a team game."

**Texas A&M:** The Aggies were one of four teams in 2005 to average 200 yards passing and rushing, but still failed to make it to a bowl. Stephen McGee takes over at quarterback for Reggie McNeal, while new defensive coordinator Gary Darnell is switching from a traditional 4-3 set to a 4-2-5.

**Texas Tech:** Familiar story in Lubbock last year: Another fifth-year senior quarterback put up NCAA record passing numbers and led the Red Raiders to their first nine-win regular season since '76. Tech will have another new QB (either sophomore Graham Harrell or redshirt freshman Chris Todd) in 2006, and also has to replace one of the nation's most versatile running backs, Taurean Henderson. ■

*Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.*



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# HERE'S

*We asked members of the Nebraska media for their predictions entering the 2006 season. Here is how they predict Nebraska will finish and why:*

**John Bishop**  
**KLIN Radio (Lincoln)**

**9-5** — For the record, I will proudly maintain that I was one game off on predicting accurately EVERY game on the schedule (the only one I missed was Pittsburgh). This year, I plan to improve on my already near-flawless accuracy. Here it goes. WINS: Louisiana Tech, Nicholls State, Troy, Kansas, Kansas State, Oklahoma State, Missouri, Texas A&M, Colorado. LOSS-ES: USC, Texas, Iowa State. Final regular-season record: 9-3. Big 12 Championship: Loss to Oklahoma. Bowl game: Holiday vs. Oregon, Loss.

**Joe Bonge,**  
**Daily Nebraskan**

**10-4** — Right now, I've got Nebraska at 10-2 regular season, with losses to USC and Texas. In a rematch, Nebraska will lose the Big 12 title game to Texas. The Huskers will finish with a berth in the Cotton or Holiday Bowl and lose that game as well. Nebraska will improve across the board offensively behind Zac Taylor's leadership and two strong running backs to win the Big 12 North. With a tough front seven and experience at linebacker and cornerback, I don't see any teams in the North knocking off Nebraska. Maybe a close one at Iowa State, with Meyer and Blythe returning.

**Sean Callahan**  
**HuskersIllustrated.com**

**11-3** — What I really like about this team is the depth of the front seven on defense and the play of Zac Taylor at quarterback. It's these two things that I feel will lead Nebraska to a 10-2 regular season and a date in the Big 12 Championship game against Oklahoma. Nebraska will win one of its big two games against Texas and USC, but will lose to either Iowa State or Texas A&M on the road. I see NU losing in Kansas City to Oklahoma, but earning a berth in the Cotton Bowl and finishing with a win in Dallas. I will also toot my own horn on last year's prediction, as I was the only media member who called Nebraska's eight-win season and Alamo Bowl appearance in last year's preseason magazine.

**Kyle Delia**  
**KOLN/KGIN TV (Lincoln/Grand Island)**

**12-2** — The Huskers will go 10-2 in the regular season. They will play strong against Southern California and make a good showing . . . they could even pull the upset, but I believe that the tough environment of the Coliseum in Los Angeles will be too much. Mark my words, Nebraska will take care of Mack Brown and the Longhorns at Memorial Stadium. Unfortunately, all great teams stumble along the way, so I will allow for one more loss. The Huskers will win the Big 12 Championship, which will make the Big Red 11-2 at that point, and bring on the Bowl Championship Series for the Huskers. Count another victory there. There is your 12-win season, and Nebraska will return to the days with a top-five national ranking at the end of season.

**Dennis Dodd**  
**CBS SportsLine.com**

**9-5 (win Big 12 North, lose the conference title game, whatever in the bowl game)** — Please tell me how any logical human cannot pick the Huskers to win the North? We're not talking about the SEC East here. Nebraska simply is the best of the rest after Oklahoma and Texas are done feeding. Bill Callahan does seem to be turning the corner with solid recruiting, an offense that gets it and a surprisingly good defense.

**Terry Douglass**  
**Grand Island Independent**

**9-5** — Don't look now, but Nebraska has suddenly become the trendy pick to win the North Division. The Cornhuskers could indeed make an appearance in the Big 12 Championship game for the first time since 1999. However, several difficult road games and a matchup with national champion Texas this season could make reaching the 10-win mark a very tall order. The key to NU's season will be keeping quarterback Zac Taylor healthy.

**Bob Hamar**  
**Grand Island Independent**

**11-3** — The Huskers will have a chance to win every game, even at Southern Cal. The Trojans will still be tough to beat, as will the Longhorns when they come to Lincoln on Oct. 21. Texas A&M in College Station will be another difficult challenge, but the Huskers should win one of those games, sweep the Big 12 North, then fall to Oklahoma in the Big 12 Championship game. A bowl victory would then complete a very successful season.

**Rich Kaipust**  
**Omaha World-Herald**

**9-5 (Big 12 title game, Holiday Bowl)** — Before getting too starry-eyed about 2006, just recall that 5-4 record last November, before NU stole one back against Kansas State, then caught Colorado when it was starting to slide and Michigan when it might have been a little disinterested. Not yet ready to be an offensive juggernaut, so hopes of getting to Kansas City on Dec. 2 hinge on the defense taking it there.

**Kevin Kugler**  
**1620 The Zone (Omaha)**

**10-4** — Losses to USC, Texas and on the road to Texas A&M . . . and a loss to Oklahoma in the Big 12 Championship. And a win in the Cotton Bowl.

**Randy Lee**  
**Pinnacle Sports Network**

**9-5** — Year 3 of the Bill Callahan-led Huskers will feature an offense with more weapons than the Huskers have had in a while and an offensive line that will be an improvement over the past few seasons. Nebraska's front 7 will be one of the best in the nation. This will be the best team the Huskers have had since Eric Crouch's senior season. However, the schedule concerns me with matchups against USC and Texas and difficult road challenges in the Big 12 Conference schedule. Nebraska will win the North, lose in the Big 12 Championship game to the Sooners and win the bowl game.

**Ed Littler**  
**KHAS TV (Hastings)**

**8-4** — I can foresee Nebraska once again achieving an 8-4 record, and I do think they'll have a shot at winning at USC! I believe the losses will come on the road for the most part, let's say at A&M, at KSU and perhaps ISU. Texas at home might be tough to win. Kansas at home will be tough. I believe NU will defeat Missouri at home. I think NU will win the first two games of the season. 9-3 will be something to shoot for, but a record of 11-1 or a BCS bowl, I believe would be a stretch.

**Lon Nichols**  
**KLKN TV (Lincoln)**

**9-5** — Bill Callahan's return to the Left Coast brings the Huskers their best win under Callahan. Nebraska improves to (3-0) with a 10-point victory over an inexperienced USC team. The undefeated run comes to an end in Ames. Bret Meyer and the Cyclones outduel Zac Taylor and Co. The Big Red destroy K-State but lose a heart-breaker to Texas. They pick up two more wins before a hiccup at College Station. Coach Hawkins' Thanksgiving is ruined as the Huskers flatten the Buffs. Adrian



Peterson powers OU to victory in the Big 12 title game. And guess who the Husker meet in the Holiday Bowl? It's a rematch with the Trojans. This time, USC repays the favor with a three-point victory. Can't wait for the '07 clash at Memorial Stadium.

**Matt Perrault**  
**Big Sports 590 Radio (Omaha)**

**10-4** — I have to put myself among many who believe that 2006 could be a special year for Nebraska. As long as Zac Taylor stays upright and healthy, Nebraska has the tools to win the Big 12 and play in the Big 12 Championship game. I am not predicting a Big 12 Championship, but I am predicting a double-digit win season and a New Year's Day bowl game. The secondary does scare me still, but it's tough to throw on a defense if the QB is on his back the whole game. The game at USC will set the tone for the rest of the season.

**Jim Rose**  
**Pinnacle Sports Network**

**10-2 (Regular season and Big 12 North Champs)** — Quality recruiting and a third year of familiarity with the WCO will bear fruit. The young OL will get better each week and barring injury to the QB, NU's offense should jell. The "Blackshirts" boast of three "difference-makers," with Carriker, Octavien and Turner. Bowman and McKeon are very close. Unity is the intangible. The Alamo win proved Callahan and Co.'s systems work. A few breaks and order will truly be restored around here.

**Brian Rosenthal**  
**Lincoln Journal Star**

**10-4** — Keep Zac Taylor healthy. Establish a solid running game. Those are the two biggest keys for Nebraska this season, and they go hand-in-hand. A consistent, dependable ground attack will mean fewer hits on Taylor, not to mention a more productive offense. Combine that with the talented defense, and there's no reason to believe Nebraska won't win the North. A BCS game is probably a bit of a stretch, but not impossible.

**Matt Schick**  
**KETV (Omaha)**

**10-4** — Nebraska will be 6-1 going into the Texas game, with the rest of the season being anybody's guess. The Huskers will clinch the North before the final week of the regular season, with the Colorado game simply being the cherry on top of a successful season. The unproven depth and youth at I-back will hold the Huskers back, with the two safety positions still an unknown quantity. The defense will keep Nebraska in every game, with the offense consistently more than holding its own for the first time under Callahan. The last three games last year were no fluke, but is this team capable of maintaining that high level for an entire season? Winning early and often will help. A Big 12 Championship game appearance vs. Oklahoma. BCS-bound? There's a chance, but I think they're still two years away from an AP Top-10 finish.

**Chris Schmidt**  
**ESPN 1480 (Lincoln)**

**9-5** — W's: La. Tech, Nicholls State, Troy, KU, KSU, OSU, Mizzou, CU, Holiday Bowl (win over Arizona or Cal). L's: USC, ISU, Texas, Texas A&M, Big 12 Championship game (loss to OU). Nebraska's success in 2006 will depend on the offensive line . . . keeping Zac Taylor upright, and having whoever is carrying the rock average more than 2.7 yard per carry. Coach Wagoner, after spring ball feels comfortable with 10 guys. That's a plus, a little more depth . . . but can the hogs up front be consistent with run and pass blocking? An early road game at USC should season the O-Line for the Big 12, regardless if NU leaves Southern Cal with a win. The Big Red is ready to take that next baby step . . . playing well on the road, not necessarily winning on the road. I expect the Huskers to just fall short in

several instances. They are probably a year away from a 10-win season and a New Year's Day bowl game.

**Jon Schuetz**  
**KETV (Omaha)**

**11-3** — The Huskers showed improvement in the last three games of the season, but I can't get the debacle at Kansas out of my memory. The offensive line is starting to LOOK more like the days of old, but they are young. That group's development is crucial. Nebraska wins the Big 12 North, loses to Texas in the Big 12 title game and finishes with a win in the Fiesta Bowl.

**Mike'I Severe**  
**1620 The Zone (Omaha)**

**11-3** — The huskers head to the Cotton bowl with a 10-3 record. Big upset of USC in week three (FG late by Congdon 26-24) followed by a close loss at home to Texas, a stunning loss to Iowa State in a windy and very miserable Jack Trice Stadium and a loss to Oklahoma in the Big 12 title game. All this if and this is a big IF Zac Taylor stays upright. That will be a little easier in 2006 because the offensive line will make huge strides with Patrick and Slauson holding it down at tackle. The front seven will be the best in the Big 12, behind maybe only Oklahoma, who has more speed, and Zack Bowman will make a name for himself against USC. 2007 Cotton Bowl Classic: Huskers 31 Auburn 21. (P.S.: 5-7 if Huskers lose Taylor early in the season).

**Steve Sipple**  
**Lincoln Journal Star**

**11-3** — Of course, this is all contingent on Zac Taylor staying healthy. Nebraska will lose close games to Southern Cal and Texas. Very close games. The Huskers will win a couple close ones, most notably at Texas A&M. They'll lose in the Big 12 title game, but finish strongly with a bowl win. The program takes another step forward.

**Kevin Sjuts**  
**KOLN/KGIN TV (Lincoln/Grand Island)**

**11-3** — Strong start, but not strong enough for USC. Nebraska will get the Trojans at a time where they'll still be trying to work out some kinks — mainly on offense. It'll be hard to win the turnover battle . . . and game . . . in SoCal. The Huskers will hit their stride when the Blackshirts give the Big 12's highest-scoring offense (Iowa State) a beatdown in Ames. The mid-season momentum will continue to build, leading up to the Longhorns coming to town. With the Big Red clicking on all cylinders, they will beat the defending champs. It's smooth sailing from there on out in the regular season — NU goes to the Big 12 Championship unblemished in conference play, where the Huskers draw Texas . . . but lose this time around. Then to the Cotton Bowl for a meeting of two offensive minds — Bill Callahan vs. Urban Meyer. Florida wins in a shootout.

**Jon Wofford**  
**KLKN TV (Lincoln)**

**11-3 (7-1 Big 12)** — After a 2-0 start, the Huskers will fall to USC, but the game will be competitive. If it was in Lincoln, I'd take the Huskers. Nebraska wins the next two at home to improve to 4-1. Then comes the "North" championship game at Iowa State, where Nebraska wins a close one. Big Red is "King" the following week against new K-State head coach Ron Prince (and I hope decommitted QB Josh Freeman plays!) The biggest win of the year will come in week eight at home against Texas. Nebraska wins at Oklahoma State and at home against Missouri, before losing to Texas A&M at College Station. The Huskers already have the Big 12 North clinched when they beat Colorado at home to end the regular season. A loss to Oklahoma in the conference title game sends the Big Red to San Diego, where they win the Holiday Bowl. This is all assuming QB Zac Taylor stays healthy. If he goes down, so does the season. ■



# Appropriat Optimis



Defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Kevin Cosgrove turned down an offer to move to the Minnesota Vikings. A deep corp of linebackers returns, including Corey McKeon (13), NU's leading tackler as a sophomore.



# tely tic



Middle linebacker Corey McKeon (13) and defensive end Adam Carriker (90) combined for 39 tackles for loss and 16 1/2 sacks.

## *Defense is one big reason to favor Huskers in Big 12 North*

**BY MIKE BABCOCK**

**PHOTOS BY SCOTT BRUHN**

**H**eeeeere's Corey... Corey McKeon was discussing Nebraska's defense during a pre-spring news conference. "We've got the experience," he said. "We've got the players. We've got the playmakers."

With those elements, and everyone healthy, "I have a feeling we're going to be one of the best defenses in the nation, hands down," the junior middle linebacker said.

Had there been a soundtrack to the news conference, it undoubtedly would have included the Rolling Stones' "Start Me Up" when McKeon sat down at the front of the room.

"If you start me up I'll never stop..."

He was asked to clarify his assertion. "One of the best defenses,

ever," he replied, emphasizing "ever." Then, lest his meaning be missed, he added: "In the history of football."

All things considered, "it's a dangerous thing," he concluded.

McKeon's comments often must be tempered. "I'm obviously the loudmouth of the group," he said. In this case, however, they were appropriately optimistic, albeit over-stated. The Cornhuskers are drawing support as favorites in the Big 12's North Division. And that support is based, in part, on defense.

Seven defensive starters return, as does coordinator Kevin Cosgrove. And the importance of that shouldn't be ignored. Cosgrove turned down an offer to become the linebackers coach for the Minnesota Vikings in January. "I think he liked to give us a little scare, show us how big-time he is, which he is," said McKeon. "It's nice that he's going to be around so

we can just stick to the same plan."

That plan produced positive results last season. Nebraska ranked fourth in the conference and 26th nationally in total defense and led the nation in quarterback sacks with 50 — double the number the Cornhuskers had in 2004, for more than twice the yardage in losses.

The increase wasn't by chance. In evaluating the 2004 season, coach Bill Callahan determined that more defensive pressure was needed, so the issue was addressed during the spring of 2005.

Among the defensive emphases this spring was creating turnovers, an area in which the Cornhuskers were deficient last season. They forced 22 turnovers in 2005, one more than in 2004, and they reduced their turnovers by nine. But the ratio was still a minus, and certainly not at a championship level.

Callahan points to Southern California to illustrate the importance of turnovers. The Trojans ranked second in the nation in turnover margin (1.62 per game), recovering 16 fumbles and intercepting 22 passes on the way to a third consecutive appearance in the BCS





**Coach Bill Callahan (right) and receivers coach Ted Gilmore welcome back a veteran group of pass catchers, including junior Terrence Nunn (83), who had 43 receptions for 495 yards and seven touchdowns.**

national championship game. And turnovers were a significant factor in that game as well. They “essentially created” the first two scores, he said.

That’s among the reasons the Nebraska defense studied video of the USC-Texas game. Turnover margin is “very telling. It decides who wins and who loses,” said Callahan.

So do talent and experience, and the Cornhuskers have both in abundance on defense. In addition to McKeon, ends Adam Carriker and Jay Moore and cornerbacks Cortney Grixby and Zack Bowman are returning starters, as are linebackers Bo Ruud and Stewart Bradley, though Bradley missed the final seven games because of a knee injury and his replacement, Adam Ickes, is gone.

Ruud, who stepped into the starting lineup after Steve Octavien suffered a broken leg early in the second quarter of the opener against Maine, also was sidelined for the Alamo Bowl game with a broken arm, allowing Lance Brandenburg to get his first start. Octavien was the talk

of spring practice and training camp because of his speed and sideline-to-sideline play-making ability.

Octavien and Ruud, who was third on the team in tackles, make weakside linebacker one of the strongest positions on the team, much less the defense. Add Phillip Dillard — one of 13 true freshmen to play last season — to the mix, and the linebackers are two-deep across the board.

Carriker, who was credited with a team-high 9 1/2 sacks and earned first-team All Big 12 recognition from the Associated Press in 2005, is a “freak of nature,” McKeon said. “He’s gotten bigger and stronger and faster at the same time.” During the winter conditioning program, the 6-foot-6, 295-pound Carriker ran some drills with the linebackers instead of with the defensive linemen.

“I’m still faster than him, thank God,” said McKeon.

McKeon was, depending on the drill, apparently. In one requiring quick bursts forward, backward and forward again, “I did get him,”

Carriker said. “I don’t know if he said that part.”

Their good-natured debate about speed aside, Carriker agrees with McKeon about the potential of the defense. Ranking among the nation’s best is “something we can definitely do. We have a lot of talent. We have returning starters. We have guys stepping up who can play very well themselves.”

Defensive tackle and safety are positions at which that has to happen, following the departures of Le Kevin Smith, Titus Adams, Daniel Bullocks and Blake Tiedtke. Safety, in particular, is a concern. Terre Green, who has moved from cornerback, and Andrew Shanle are inexperienced.

Green and Shanle stepped up in the spring, however, as did Ola Dagunduro and Barry Cryer at the tackles, McKeon said after the Spring Game. So “we’re a step ahead of where we were last spring. People have filled their roles already. That’s something that didn’t come together until fall camp.”



Parts of the offense still need to come together in training camp if Nebraska is to get to the Big 12 championship game, at Arrowhead Stadium, for the first time since 1999.

Though more starters return on offense — well, one more — the line must be solidified and some order of rotation determined at I-back, where Cory Ross no longer provides running, receiving and pass-protection blocking.

Callahan promised that competition in those two areas during the spring would be “knock-down, drag-out.” And it was. The Cornhuskers did more scrimmaging than at any time during his first two years as coach. The spring was “very taxing from a physical aspect,” he said.

The line was without center Kurt Mann, a two-year starter who watched from the sideline, recovering from shoulder surgery. Greg Austin and Andy Christensen divided time between center and guard, where Mike Huff was in the rotation, with Matt Slauson, Chris Patrick and Lydon Murtha manning the tackles with the first team. Offensive line coach Dennis Wagner regularly included yet-to-arrive junior college transfer Carl Nicks, a guard or tackle, in discussions of what the group would look like in the fall.

“Our young line is coming along,” said Callahan. “They’re getting better.”

Nebraska’s running game was the worst in the Big 12 (and No. 107 nationally), averaging 96 yards per game and 2.7 per carry. And that was with Ross carrying the ball. The rushing averages were distorted a little by the fact that quarterback Zac Taylor was sacked 38 times for 253 yards in losses. But even discounting the sacks, the running game was far from championship level.

Marlon Lucky and Cody Glenn emerged from the spring as the top candidates to replace the versatile Ross, although running backs coach Randy Jordan said the position would operate by committee. Lucky and Glenn offer contrasting styles, with Glenn being more of a power back. Regardless of the style, however, the running back has to be able to pass-protect, to pick up blitzes.

Success in 2006 will be inextricably tied to Taylor’s remaining up-

right and healthy. The running game can improve. The line can develop. But without Taylor in charge, Nebraska’s offense will be — to borrow from the title of a Tom Robbins novel — just another roadside attraction.

Taylor has picked up a complicated system in two springs and one season, and “what he brings to the table as a player, man, it’s inspiring,” Callahan said. “Your hair curls up on your back. You want to play for this guy. Honest to God, he’s the most positive, enthusiastic, supportive player that I’ve ever been around in my career. He is what you look for in a quarterback.” And in a leader.

“The confidence he has in the offensive line and the running backs, the protection, the receivers, every-

thing . . . I mean, pretty much Zac’s game, now, is all confidence,” said Slauson. “He’s what makes our whole offense go, and I think it’s huge for him to stay healthy.”

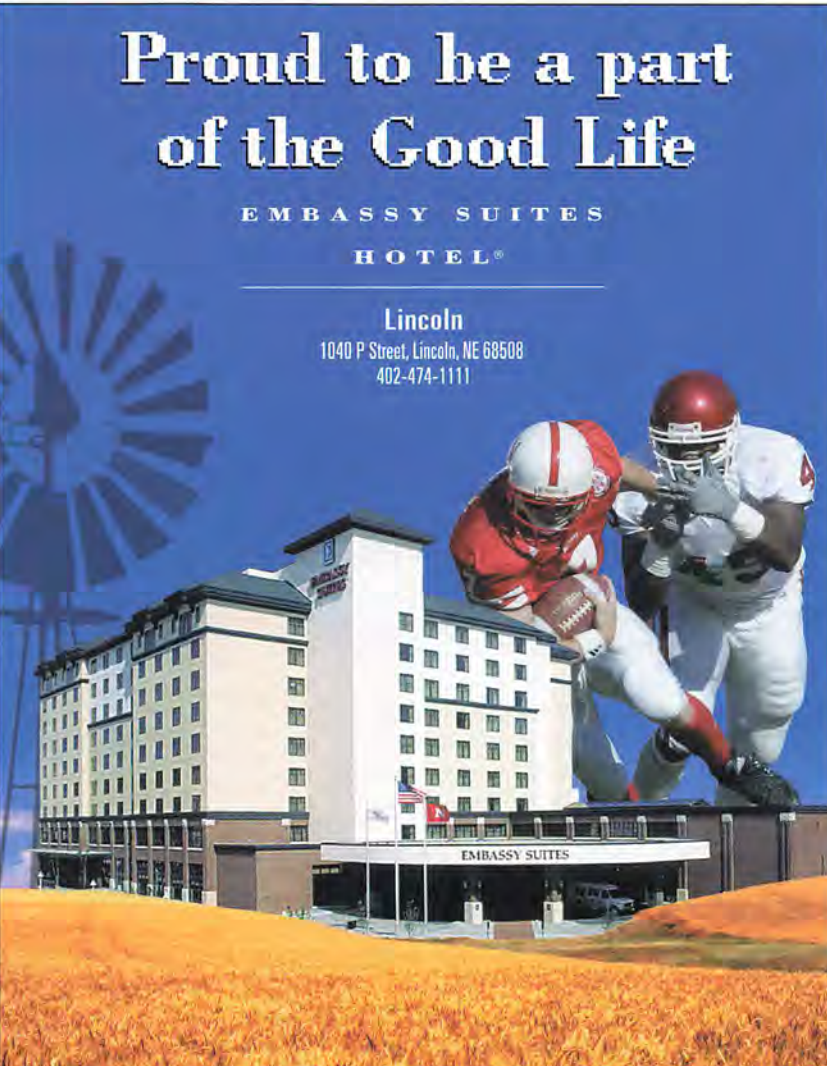
Taylor’s confidence is bolstered by an intact receiving corps, headed by sophomore Nate Swift and junior Terrence Nunn, who combined to catch 88 passes for 1,136 yards and 14 touchdowns. The passing game is “a lot smoother now because last year Zac was just coming in and I was just learning, Nate was just coming out,” said Nunn. “Zac’s been there. Zac’s run it. And I can see the difference.”

Confidence also characterizes Swift, who led the team in receiving, his 45 catches exceeded only by Johnny Rodgers, Nebraska’s first Heisman Trophy winner. And that

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despite not catching a pass in the first three games. Though soft-spoken, Swift "exudes confidence," Callahan said.

The return of tight end Matt Herian from a broken leg in the eighth game of the 2004 season will add another receiving weapon. Taylor's first opportunity to work with Herian was during seven-on-seven passing drills during the winter. "You can just see what type of hands he's got," said Taylor. "That's the biggest thing you notice right off the bat; he's got wide-receiver hands."

Herian's speed seemed to be returning during the spring and his confidence never wavered. "He hasn't lost his place in this program at all. Guys really respect him. They know he's a great player. They just respect the hard work he's put in to put himself back in this position," Taylor said.

Herian was slowed by a hamstring problem in the spring, but he made it through the Spring Game and all indications are he'll be ready to contribute, along with Bradley, Ruud and Mann.

Fifty percent of the kicking returns. Place-kicker Jordan Congdon, a Freshman All-American, already ranks with the best in the conference. His field goal success rate was the best. But the departure of punter Sam Koch leaves a significant void, which will be filled by an untested walk-on, any one of three or four. Sophomore Dan Titchener gained the edge during the spring but that competition will continue.

McKeon's optimism was the order of the day in winter conditioning and spring practice because of last season's strong finish, which included a bowl game victory. Even so, "our players realize it's not the end-all," Callahan said during the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference.

Players have been in his system and have had time to learn it. Now "we have to step it up. We have to take it to another level. That (Alamo Bowl) just gave us the confidence to do that," he said.

He resorted to coach-speak when asked about being picked as North Division favorite. That's "great for the fans and it's good reading and all that," he said. "But I tell you, honest-

ly, it's what you do at the end; that's all that matters. That's where our focus is at. We're just trying to be the best team we can be. And we've focused on that concept from the day I got here. That's all we can control."

In order to be the best they can be, the Cornhuskers have to be able to run the ball better than they did last season. McKeon commented on Callahan's commitment to controlling that following the first major scrimmage of the spring. "Out of the 45 plays, there were about 42 runs,

40 of them being powers," McKeon said. "So, I mean, Coach Callahan really wants to run the ball a lot this year."

"He was just talking about it. He wants to run the ball 40 times a game, and if he's got to take it, rep it that many times in practice to get it right . . . you gotta get it right."

So much running in practice can only make the defense better, too. And the defense is already going to be good. Just ask McKeon. He'll tell you. ■

## HUSKERS AT A GLANCE



**PROJECTED  
2006 FINISH:**

# 1<sup>st</sup>

**NORTH  
DIVISION**

### 2006 SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time
<b>Sept. 2</b>	Louisiana Tech	TBA
<b>Sept. 9</b>	Nicholls State	TBA
<b>Sept. 16</b>	@USC (ABC)	7:00
<b>Sept. 23</b>	Troy	TBA
<b>Sept. 30</b>	Kansas	TBA
<b>Oct. 7</b>	@Iowa State	TBA
<b>Oct. 14</b>	@Kansas State	TBA
<b>Oct. 21</b>	Texas	TBA
<b>Oct. 28</b>	@Oklahoma State	TBA
<b>Nov. 4</b>	Missouri (Homecoming)	TBA
<b>Nov. 11</b>	@Texas A&M	TBA
<b>Nov. 24</b>	Colorado (ABC)	2:30

(Times are subject to change and are Central)

### TENTATIVE TWO-DEEPS

TE(Y)	Player	H	A	Sr.
11	<b>Matt Herian***</b>	6-5	245	Sr.
85	<b>J.B. PHILLIPS**</b>	6-3	250	Jr.
LT	<b>Chris Patrick*</b>	6-4	290	Jr.
76	<b>Lydon Murtha*</b>	6-7	315	So.
LG	<b>Andy Christensen</b>	6-3	300	So.
72	<b>Rodney Picou</b>	6-4	300	RFr.
C	<b>KURT MANN**</b>	6-4	290	Sr.
59	<b>Brett Byford</b>	6-3	305	Jr.
RG	<b>GREG AUSTIN***</b>	6-1	290	Sr.
61	<b>Mike Huff*</b>	6-4	305	So.
RT	<b>Matt Slauson*</b>	6-5	335	So.
75	<b>Victory Haines</b>	6-7	285	Jr.
WR(X)	<b>NATE SWIFT*</b>	6-2	195	So.
7	<b>Frantz Hardy*</b>	6-1	180	Jr.
WR(Z)	<b>TERRENCE NUNN**</b>	6-0	185	Jr.
80	<b>Tyrell Spain</b>	6-3	190	Jr.
QB	<b>ZAC TAYLOR*</b>	6-2	210	Sr.
3	<b>Harrison Beck*</b>	6-2	215	So.
IB	<b>20 Marlon Lucky*</b>	6-0	210	So.
34	<b>Cody Glenn*</b>	6-0	230	So.
FB	<b>41 DANE TODD***</b>	5-11	235	Sr.
33	<b>Grant Miller*</b>	6-0	225	Sr.

DE(O)	Player	H	A	Sr.
44	<b>JAY MOORE**</b>	6-4	280	Sr.
99	<b>Barry Turner*</b>	6-3	250	So.
NT	<b>54 Ola Dagunduro*</b>	6-2	300	Sr.
77	<b>Ndamukong Suh</b>	6-4	320	So.
DT	<b>94 Barry Cryer*</b>	6-2	280	Sr.
43	<b>Ty Steinkuhler*</b>	6-3	275	So.
DE(B)	<b>90 ADAM CARRIKER***</b>	6-6	295	Sr.
98	<b>Zach Potter*</b>	6-7	275	So.
SLB	<b>34 STEWART BRADLEY***</b>	6-4	245	Sr.
40	<b>Lance Brandenburg**</b>	6-1	230	Jr.
MLB	<b>40 COREY MCKEON*</b>	6-1	225	Jr.
38	<b>Phillip Dillard*</b>	6-1	250	So.
WLB	<b>15 Steve Octavien</b>	6-0	240	Jr.
51	<b>BO RUUD**</b>	6-3	230	Jr.
LCB	<b>2 CORTNEY GRIXBY**</b>	5-9	170	Jr.
21	<b>Titus Brothers*</b>	5-11	190	Jr.
FS	<b>8 Andrew Shanle***</b>	6-1	210	Sr.
28	<b>Bryan Wilson</b>	6-1	200	Jr.
SS	<b>30 TIERRE GREEN**</b>	6-1	200	Jr.
46	<b>Ben Eisenhart*</b>	5-11	200	Jr.
RCB	<b>14 ZACKARY BOWMAN*</b>	6-12	195	Sr.
35	<b>Chris LeFlora</b>	5-10	205	Jr.

### NOTES

— Returning lettermen in bold  
 — Returning starters in CAPS  
 — \* Letters earned

### SPECIALISTS

P	Player	H	A	Sr.
97	<b>Dan Titchener</b>	6-0	195	So.
98	<b>Jake Wesch*</b>	6-1	200	So.
PK	<b>27 JORDAN CONGDON*</b>	5-11	175	So.
LS	<b>93 LANE KELLY***</b>	6-4	270	Sr.
55	<b>Nathan McBride</b>	6-1	205	RFr.

### 2005 RECORD: 8-4

#### CONFERENCE RECORD: 4-4

S	Opponent	W/L
S 3	Maine	W, 25-7
S 10	Wake Forest	W, 31-3
S 17	Pittsburgh	W, 7-6
O 1	Iowa State	W, 27-20 (2 ot)
O 8	Texas Tech	L, 34-31
O 15	@Baylor	W, 23-14
O 22	@Missouri	L, 41-24
O 29	Oklahoma	L, 31-24
N 5	@Kansas	L, 40-15
N 12	Kansas State	W, 27-25
N 25	@Colorado	W, 30-3
D 28	*vs. Michigan	W, 32-28

\*Alamo Bowl, San Antonio

Scouting reports for other Big 12 schools begin on Page 75



# Changing Times

*Senior line veterans have seen many changes in their years at Nebraska*

## Quarterback?

**COVER STORY BY MIKE BABCOCK**

**M**ost fans know Adam Carriker's story by now. Interest and coverage of Nebraska football is such that fifth-year seniors have few secrets. But when new coaches have arrived — and a few have during his time — they've been surprised to find out he played quarterback in high school.

They've looked at the 6-foot-6, 295-pound defensive end and said, "No way."

The only means of persuading them, short of bringing old newspaper clippings, has been by throwing. And he hasn't thrown often, maybe a half-dozen times in the last four years.

His technique leaves much to be desired. And his accuracy "wasn't that great to begin with," he said. But he claims to have the arm strength to heave it "75 to 80 yards." If that's true, he could have challenged former Cornhusker Dominic Raiola, a center, in a long-throw contest.

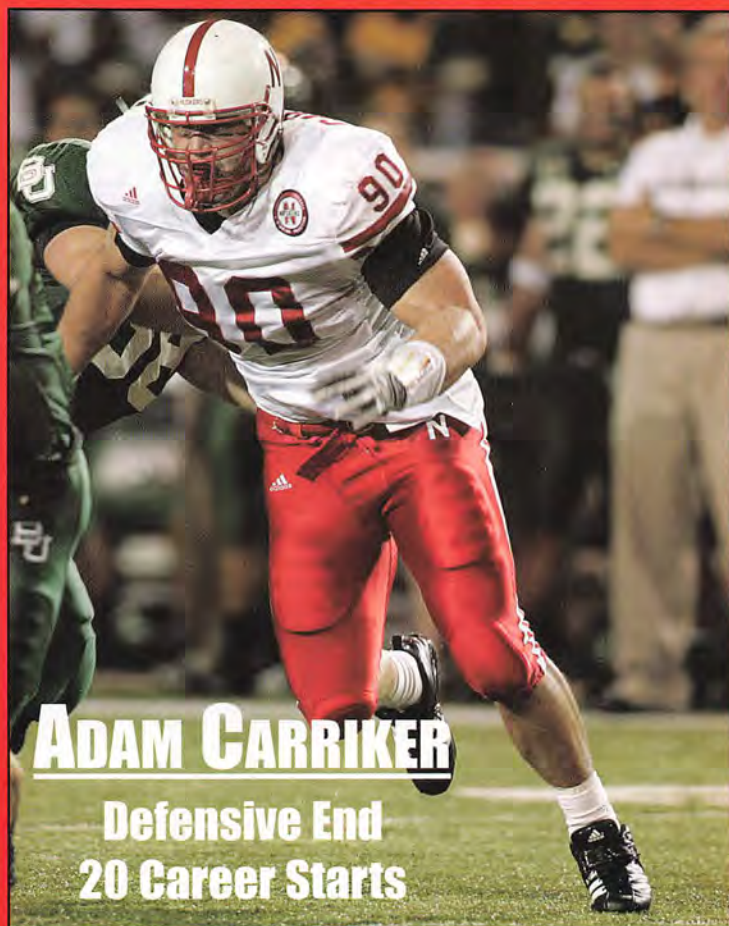
Few, if any, of his teammates can match him for distance, Carriker said. Quarterback Harrison Beck "might say he can, but he's got to put a little more arch on the ball than I do."

As a youngster, Carriker's athletic goal was either-or: playing baseball in the major leagues or playing football at Nebraska — and then, given his success as a Cornhusker, playing in the NFL. He considered entering the NFL Draft following last season, though not as seriously as was reported.

The possibility of his leaving early was blown out of proportion, he said. He did talk to his parents, who left the decision to him. "I thought about it," he said. "But I really wanted to come back and play my senior year. I grew up wanting to play football here."

Carriker inherited that passion from his dad, who grew up in tiny Giltner, Neb. Adam was born in nearby Hastings, but the family moved to Kennewick, Wash., when he was 3.

Interest in the Cornhuskers went along to Washington, and whenever a game was televised, he watched. Reception wasn't always the best. Nebraska played Washington when



he was in high school, and he remembers his dad being upset because the signal was blocked by a hill behind the house.

"There were squiggly lines. You could barely make out anything," said Carriker.

Nevertheless, he and his dad watched the Cornhusker victory, what they could see of it.

His dad "wasn't very happy," he said. "That's one thing I remember."

He also remembers, from an earlier age, watching Nebraska-Oklahoma games and bowl games in which the Cornhuskers played, not only live but also on videotape.

His dad has kept most of the tapes, he said, except for the one of the 2002 Rose Bowl loss against Miami for the BCS national championship. He's pretty sure that got taped over.



Nebraska hadn't offered a scholarship yet. His high school team had won its first game that season before losing eight in a row. The streak would be 17 by the end of his senior year.

Carriker played quarterback for three seasons at Kennewick High, the first two in a pass-oriented attack and the third in an option offense. He also played defensive end that third season.

Oregon State was the first to offer a scholarship. The Beavers were interested in him as a quarterback, or so then-coach Dennis Erickson told him. Erickson might have thought that's what he wanted to hear, but the 6-6, 230-pound Carriker had had enough of getting hit. If he had gone to Oregon State, he would have done so with the understanding he would play defensive end, not quarterback.

Despite his affection for Nebraska, Carriker might have gone to Oregon State or Oregon or, more likely, Washington State. His recruiting visit would have had to have been horrible for him not to be impressed with the Cornhuskers. But they wanted him to grayshirt his first year.

He didn't want to go halfway across the country and pay for a year when he could stay close to home and be on scholarship. Nebraska quickly backed off the grayshirt suggestion.

Carriker began playing organized football because of the Cornhuskers. But growing up, he was more interested in baseball, he said, and he might have focused on that if he hadn't suffered an elbow injury during the summer following his sophomore year in high school.

He was a pitcher, with a fastball clocked at 93 miles an hour before the injury. He was told the muscle had been detached from the bone, and he would need surgery to fix it. "I'd be out of sports for a year and then at the end of the year, they couldn't even guarantee I could pitch again," he said.

He decided against the surgery and turned his focus to football.

The injury was probably a blessing. Carriker has positioned himself to be a first-round NFL draft pick, after a junior season in which the Cornhusker coaches picked him as the team's defensive MVP. He made the Associated Press All-Big 12 first team and the conference coaches' second team, so "I considered myself one-and-a-half-(first)-team All-Big 12," he said. "My goal is to be first team on both."

Earning All-America recognition also is "definitely a goal of mine," he said.

Carriker and the team's other seniors have seen dramatic changes in the program. When he was a freshman redshirt, the Cornhuskers finished 7-7, failing to win at least nine games for the first time since 1968, and when he was a sophomore, they endured their first losing season since 1961.

He has played for three defensive coordinators and two head coaches, not counting the 2003 Alamo Bowl for which Bo Pelini served as interim coach. And he has dealt with fan disaffection, including after the team dropped three in a row last season, before finishing strong.

"People weren't backing us very much," Carriker said.

He understands the expectations, having grown up with Cornhusker football. He was upset in 1998, when Nebraska, under new coach Frank Solich, was beset by injuries and finished 9-4.

"I was frustrated that they lost four games," he said. "So I can kind of relate. I still feel the same way. Being on the inside is a little different, but I could understand. I was frustrated myself. 'This isn't what Nebraska is used to. It's not what we did.' You have to learn to work through that."

Carriker has learned a lot during his time at Nebraska. His first season, as a redshirt, "I was definitely a little intimidated; I'm not going to lie," he said. "That first year was kind of a haze and a blur to me now. But you get to know people. You get used to the program."

He didn't look like someone who had played quarterback in high school even as a freshman. And he's changed dramatically since then. As a matter of fact, he has changed just since last season.

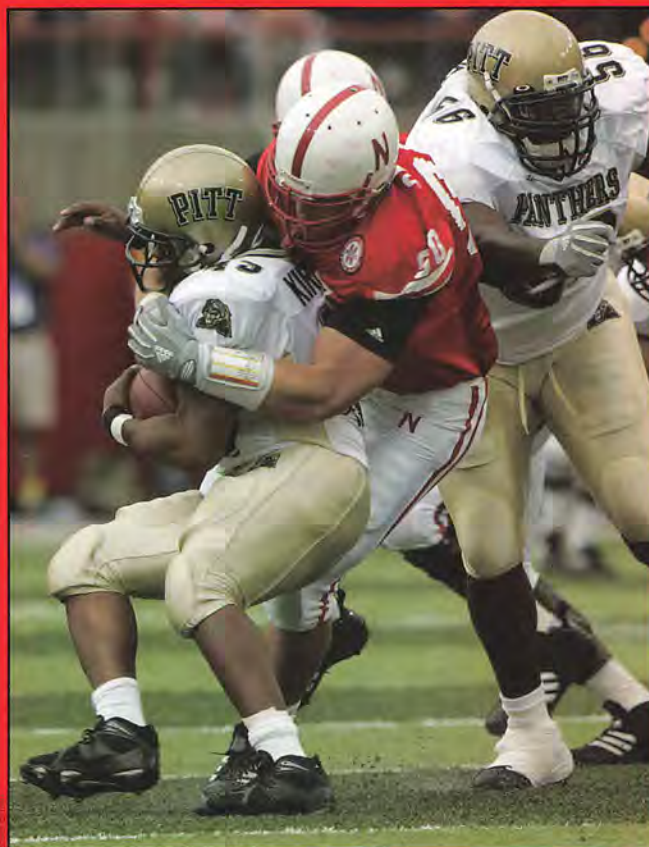
He was 10 to 15 pounds heavier in the spring, without losing speed or quickness, the result of dedication in the weight room, not only under the direction of strength coach Dave Kennedy but on his own as well. During winter conditioning, he lifted three hours a day, four days a week. He would lift with the team in the early morning, go to class and then lift after lunch by himself, often on East Campus.

He also ate healthier, eliminating fast food. At first that "really sucked," he said.

He adjusted, however, and has no problem avoiding it now because "I know what's in those foods. It doesn't disgust me. It tastes good. But I can't enjoy it, knowing what's going into my body."

Carriker was credited with 9 1/2 sacks and 19 quarterback hurries last season, both team-high totals. He has become a nightmare for those at the position he once played — quarterback.

Seriously, he was a quarterback until he got to Nebraska. ■



Adam Carriker had 17 tackles for losses and 9 1/2 sacks last season as a junior.





# KURT MANN

Center 23 Career Starts

## Persistence Pays Off

COVER STORY BY TERRY DOUGLASS

**T**he sense of responsibility that goes with being a Cornhusker football player in the state of Nebraska certainly isn't lost on Kurt Mann.

Although Mann probably doesn't count public speaking among his favorite activities, he doesn't shy away from opportunities to try to make a positive impact on the lives of youngsters, especially in his hometown of Grand Island, Neb. In the past year, he has addressed groups ranging from more than 1,000 people at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes banquet to the smaller settings of elementary classrooms in Nebraska's "Third City."

"I'm not a big talker, but I feel like some of the things I've done as far as academics kind of speak for themselves," said Mann, an Academic All-American who graduated in May with a 3.977 grade-point average in mechanized systems management. "I don't really want to talk about something unless I have the credentials to back it up, I guess."

Being an impressionable young Big Red fan himself not too many years ago, Mann knows very well that his status as a Nebraska football player can open the eyes and ears of youngsters.

"I can definitely tell the kids that were like me when I was young," Mann said. "When I was in elementary school or middle school, if I had a Husker football player come and talk to us, I just would've been all ears, and I wouldn't have taken my eye off of them."

"I always pick out those kids that are like that, who are just so focused on you, and you know that what you say to those kids is really going to get through. That's what makes it worthwhile."

As the superintendent at Grand Island Senior High, Dr. Kent Mann, Kurt's father, finds it especially satisfying that his son is willing to slip outside his comfort zone to convey the importance of being a good student and a good person.

"He has taken advantage of some great opportuni-



ties," Kent Mann said. "Finishing his degree was a tremendous accomplishment for him and the Academic All-American piece has really been powerful in terms of what he had to do to accomplish that."

A standout student in high school as well, Kurt Mann admits that it hasn't always been easy to juggle academics with playing big-time college football.

"It's tough. It always seemed that with most of the classes for some reason, most of your tests would always fall in the same week," Mann said. "Those are the weeks that were the toughest because you were always feeling like you were forgetting to study for something or hand something in. Then you had your film study and practice and weight lifting to get in."

"Sometimes it feels like you're running around like a chicken with its head cut off."

Mann said it's been an eye-opening experience to realize just how much celebrity comes with being a Husker in a state where football is like a second religion. One of those moments, he said, came back in May when he spoke to a class at Engleman elementary school in Grand Island and realized that one of the teachers had taught him in third grade.

"It seems like the time has just flown by, and it's weird to think of how much has happened from then to now," Mann said.

"A lot of times, you almost forget what you've done. Then, something happens that kind of wakes you up and makes you realize how much you have accomplished."

Meanwhile, many others have been keeping track. Among them is Mark Fritch, Mann's high school football coach in Grand Island and now the head coach at Papillion-LaVista (Neb.) South High School.

Fritch said he was fairly certain that Mann would eventually develop into a starter at Nebraska. However, he admits to having one small concern.

"I suppose that was about the only thing people maybe questioned was if he was mean enough," Fritch said. "He just never comes across that way, but if you've ever seen Kurt get under a bar and lift weights, you know that he's pretty darn tough and that he's not going to back down from anything."

While Fritch said he's proud to call Mann one of his

former players, he's even more impressed with the person he has become.

"Every time I see Kurt, the first thing he asks me is how my wife is and how my children are doing," Fritch said. "That tells you a little bit about the quality of person he is."

Kent Mann has seen many other similar instances with his son since he left home to become a Husker.

"From a dad's perspective, I've just seen my son just become an outstanding young man," Kent Mann said. "I

think the most impressive thing for me has been the way that he's dealt with the pressure. His whole transition into that role as a starter was a little bit overwhelming — at least from my perspective — and he stepped into that role and hasn't looked back."

Kurt Mann said his experience of playing football at Nebraska has definitely made him mentally tougher. He's already accomplished things that he never thought he could and gained confidence because of it.

Perhaps the most difficult part was fighting through the pangs of self doubt that sometimes creep into the minds of first-year players.

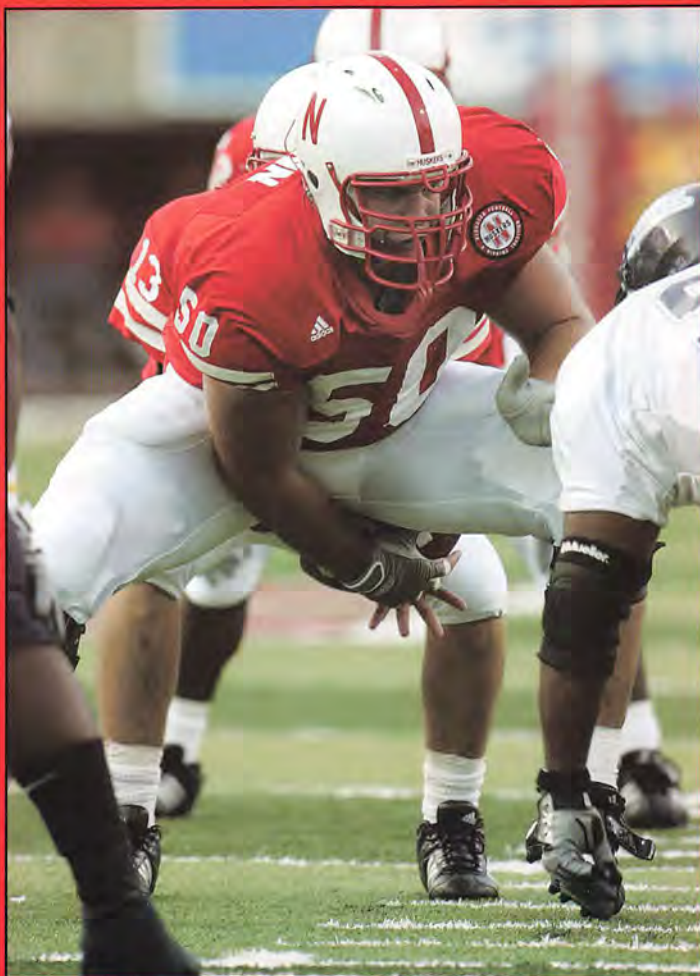
"There was a little doubt because you don't really know," Mann said. "That first summer, I went down to Lincoln to run with the guys, and I felt like I could stay with

them athletically. Then, you kind of get knocked down a little bit going through two-a-days, and you realize there's a lot more to football than just athleticism.

"Coming out of that first whole year, you kind of realize that time is the only thing that is separating yourself from a starting position and that you just have to be patient and keep at it."

Persistence certainly paid off for Mann, who is scheduled to start at center for a third consecutive season for the Huskers in 2006. With his final season at Nebraska looming in the fall, Mann said he plans to make a conscious effort to cherish every moment of his final go-around at NU.

"It will be the last time and that will hard, but at the same time, time never stops, and it just keeps going," Mann said. "Trying to slow it down is not going to help any, so you just try to take it in as much as I can." ■



Kurt Mann took over as the starting center as a sophomore.



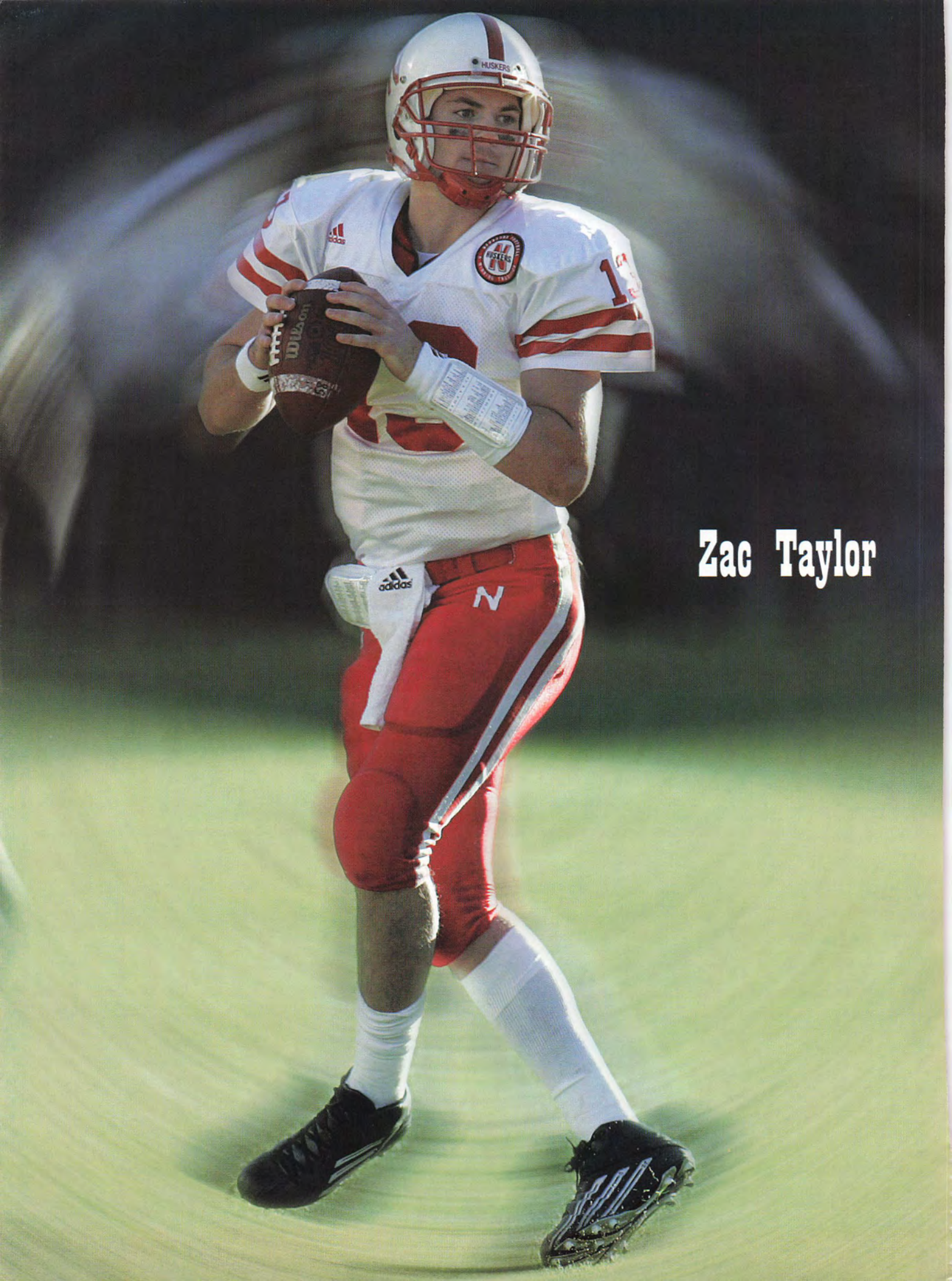


# **POSITION-BY-POSITION BREAKDOWN**

**STORIES BY MIKE BABCOCK**

**PHOTOS: SCOTT BRUHN, NU SPORTS INFORMATION**





**Zac Taylor**



# He Just Got Here

Only yesterday, it seems, Zac Taylor was discussing the circuitous route he took from Norman, Okla., to Nebraska: two seasons at Wake Forest, one as a redshirt, and a season at Butler County Community College in El Dorado, Kan., directing the Grizzlies to the NJCAA title game.

Only yesterday, it seems, he was explaining how his dad Sherwood was a captain at Oklahoma, how he grew up not far from the Sooners' storied Owen Field and how when he made his recruiting visit to Nebraska, J.B. Phillips showed him around after first asking if he threw to the tight ends.

And only yesterday, it seems, Taylor was talking about competing with incumbent Joe Dailey during spring practice for the job as the Cornhuskers' No. 1 quarterback. That's why he came to Nebraska, he said, to be the starter. He was confident but not brash, far from it, as the passing of time has shown.

So anyway, time flies when you're having fun. And, by all accounts, he has had fun.

But the reality is he hasn't been at Nebraska all that long. A drawback to recruiting junior college players is, as often as not, they're in the system far too briefly. For every Mike Rozier, there's at least one Demorrio Williams and probably more. Rozier ran roughshod over and through Cornhusker opponents for three seasons. But Williams had only two in which to wreck havoc before moving on to the NFL. Junior college transfers earn our respect and then they're gone, two seasons, three at the most.

Taylor captured the fancy of Nebraska fans in one season. He was recruited to push Dailey in practice, to provide competition until Harrison Beck arrived. He pushed Dailey, all right, all the way to North Carolina. And he held onto the job many thought would be Beck's for the taking.

Held it? At no point did he appear to be in serious danger of dropping it. Taylor rewrote the passing section of

## At A Glance

### Returning

Zac Taylor	6-2, 210	Sr.
Harrison Beck	6-2, 215	So.
Joey Ganz	6-1, 200	So.
Beau Davis	6-4, 185	So.

### Outlook

Taylor is in charge. The questions are what happens if he goes down with an injury and, though less pressing, who succeeds him next season? Presumably, Beck is the answer to both. But the much-publicized sophomore from Clearwater, Fla., missed significant time in the spring because of a tweaked hamstring and a sore shoulder, for which he had two MRIs. The second MRI came after the spring and re-affirmed the results of the first, no damage. So the doctor's recommendation was rest and rehab.

Even though he missed a half-dozen practices in the spring, he "was in every meeting. He still was with Coach (Jay) Norvell for every installation, every play that was put in. So from the mental aspect of it, he was still learning and still being drilled," coach Bill Callahan said. "His progress is still moving on schedule. I've told our coaches he's a young guy and he's getting better. And he has the sense and the purpose of being and competing as a starting quarterback in this conference."

Beck was the only other quarterback to see action last season. And he didn't see much, playing at the end of the Kansas State and Colorado games after it appeared he might be redshirted. He threw only 10 passes, completing one, against Kansas State. But it was big, picking up 21 yards and setting up Jordan Congdon's winning field goal, after his interception led to the Wildcats' go-ahead field goal.

With Beck sidelined in the spring, Ganz got more reps and improved, said Callahan. "He can make plays because of his mobility. That's the one thing I'm attracted to when I watch him play. He continues to be that mobile quarterback, not only outside the pocket but when you watch him work in the pocket, he's got excellent feet. He knows how to push the pocket and make off-balance throws and odd-ball throws."

Though he has yet to get in a game, Ganz has been in the system for two full years and "understands the concepts," Callahan said. "He's a great system quarterback. I really like him a lot."

Davis has more game experience than Ganz, for what that's worth, playing in the second half of a forgettable loss at Texas Tech as a true freshman. He effectively red-shirted last season.

The 2006 recruiting class didn't include a quarterback, after Josh Freeman backed out of an oral commitment and signed with Kansas State. But another quarterback could join the competition in the fall. Lyle Moevao was slated to visit Nebraska and Oregon State in early June before deciding whether to transfer from El Camino Community College, according to newspaper reports.

The 6-foot, 225-pound Moevao, who is from Torrance, Calif., threw for 2,700 yards and 29 touchdowns as a freshman at the California junior college after playing in a run-oriented offense in high school. Nebraska reportedly had offered a scholarship immediately, while Oregon State wanted him to remain at El Camino Community College for another season. If he were to come to Nebraska, he would have four years to complete three seasons of eligibility. His decision has probably been made.



## 13 ZAC TAYLOR

Quarterback

6-2/210

Sr./One Letter

Norman, Okla.

Taylor easily broke NU's 33-year old single-season passing record by throwing for 2,653 yards in 12 games. He also set season records for pass completions (237) and attempts (430).



## 3 HARRISON BECK

Quarterback

6-2/215

So./One Letter

Clearwater, Fla.

Beck saw limited action as a backup, but keyed a game-winning drive against Kansas State. He missed significant time in the spring because of a tweaked hamstring and a sore shoulder.



## 8 JOEY GANZ

Quarterback

6-1/200

So./No Letters

Palos Heights, Ill.

Ganz was listed No. 2 for much of last season but didn't see game action. He did get a lot of work in the spring, with Beck slowed by injuries. He completed 5-of-19 passes in the Spring Game.



## 15 BEAU DAVIS

Quarterback

6-4/185

So./No Letters

Venice, Calif.

Davis redshirted last year after playing in the second half of a forgettable loss at Texas Tech as a true freshman. In the Spring Game, he finished 0-for-6 passing and had three carries for 4 yards.



the Cornhusker record book, completing 237-of-430 attempts (both records) for 2,653 yards and 19 touchdowns. Dave Humm's passing-yardage record (2,074) had held since 1972. And his career-passing-yardage record (5,035) will be in jeopardy this season, if Taylor can remain healthy.

Durability was among the many qualities Taylor brought to the position. He was sacked 38 times but knocked out of a game only once, against Kansas State. And in characteristic fashion, instead of blaming the offensive line for the sacks, he accepted responsibility for the breakdowns.

If the number of sacks is to be reduced, "a lot of it's going to be me recognizing certain blitzes and things like that, keeping myself out of trouble," he said. The fault is "not always theirs (the linemen's). A lot of times I miss things that I could have changed that would have helped me out."

Recognition of blitzes was a point of emphasis in spring practice. At the beginning of last season "that was something I really had a lot of trouble with. I was real stiff and staying in one place. Now, with experience, you kind of get a feel where pressure is going to come," said Taylor.

Identifying defensive fronts and coverages and then communicating what he sees, getting everyone on the same page, is the next step. "The great quarterbacks do that. The great quarterbacks have a command of establishing a blocking scheme for the center and for the front," coach Bill Callahan said. "They have a way of redirecting and re-identifying particular defenders based on alignment."

Taylor became more adept at that as the season progressed. He completed nearly 60 percent of his passes in conference play, compared to 42 percent against nonconference opponents. And he finished strong, completing 27-of-43 passes for 397 yards and two touchdowns without an interception at Colorado, then throwing for three touchdowns against Michigan in the Alamo Bowl game.

Callahan's respect for him is reflected in the use of "great." Making plays based on recognition of the defense is "tough. It's really tough," said Callahan. "But the great ones can do it."

Taylor apparently shares his passion. Callahan fairly gushed when talking about him during the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference. "I feel that you can't give him enough," Callahan said. "Every day he comes in here, he's wide-eyed, he's energetic, he's eager. As much as you can give him, he can handle. He's very smart. He's bright. He's articulate. And he's got great character."

"He's become more serious, not that he wasn't before. But since he's got a better grasp of what we're doing, he's really taken a lot of command over this situation. He's just challenged every day by the system. He loves it. He loves football. And we couldn't have a better leader on our football team."

Only yesterday, it seems, Taylor was anticipating getting a copy of Callahan's playbook. "Just on my visit I've kind of got bits and pieces of the offense," he said, adding that from what he had heard the playbook was complicated and he would have to "take some time to learn it."

The time, it seems, has passed quickly — no pun intended. ■



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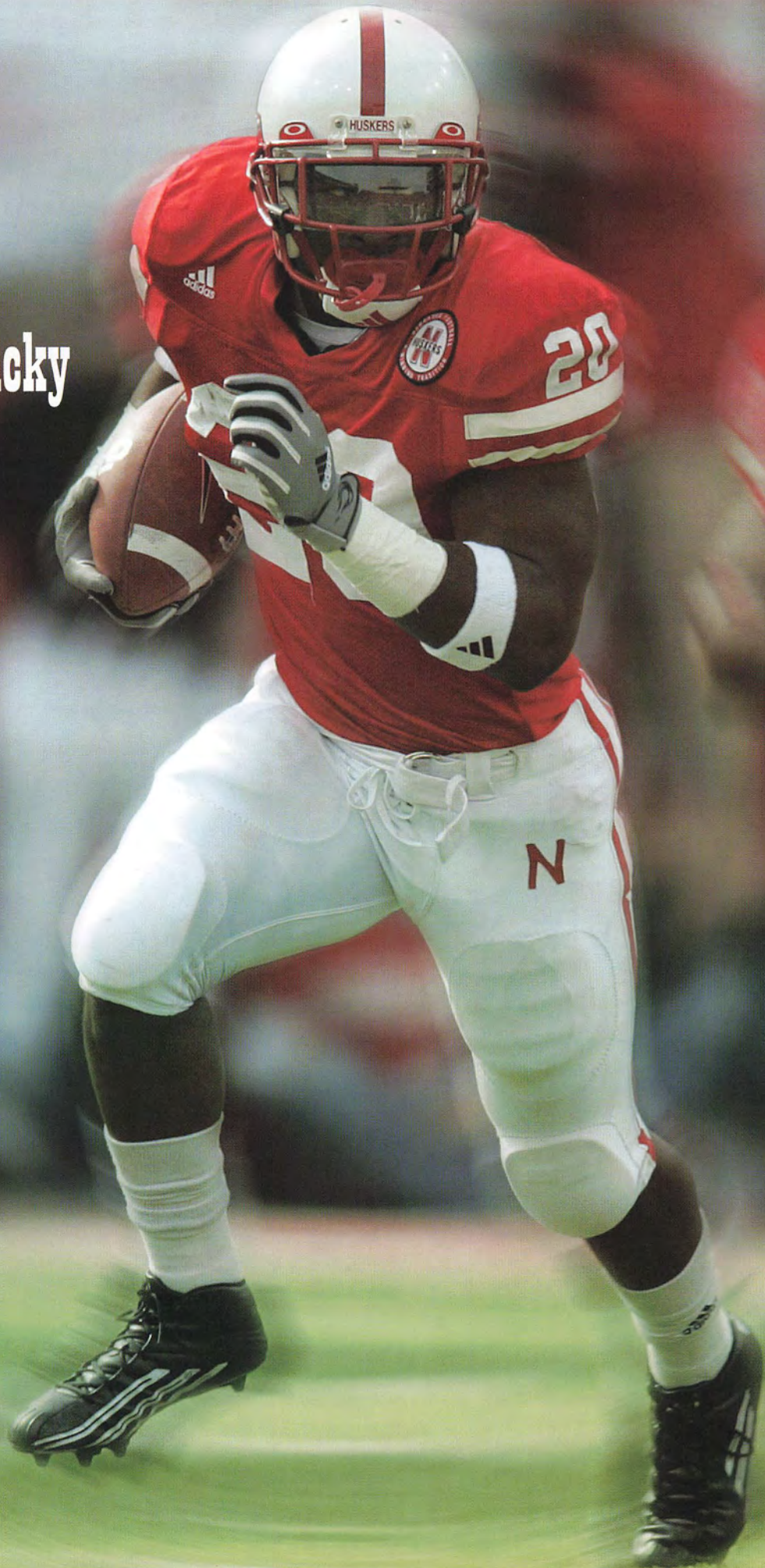
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***. . . All The Time***



**Marlon Lucky**





# Now, On With The Show

**B**ut seriously, folks . . . Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach Jon Gruden, the featured speaker at the Nebraska coaches' clinic in the spring, was asked if he had seen any players with pro potential at the Cornhuskers' practice. He had but wouldn't mention names, he said. "I don't want anybody to know what my evaluation is."

After acknowledging "some good-looking defensive linemen," however, he mentioned a name, Marlon Lucky's. "Nebraska's lucky to have him, I'll say that," Gruden said, displaying an ability to turn a phrase. Lucky to have Lucky, get it? He "looks like a fine player," Gruden said.

The next day, following the final scrimmage before the Spring Game, Lucky was asked if he had heard about Gruden's compliment. His answer was typically succinct; he tosses around words as if they were man-hole covers. "No," he said. When it comes to talking, he is no Corey McKeon.

Lucky is accustomed to such compliments, though not necessarily from NFL coaches. He was the most nationally prominent member of the Cornhuskers' 2005 recruiting class. Though quarterback Harrison Beck drew comparable attention — and maybe more — within the state, and cornerback Zack Bowman also carried a five-star rating, Lucky was the centerpiece of the group.

He was a Parade All-American. Rivals.com rated him No. 2 in the country among high school running backs, as did SuperPrep Magazine. And Tom Lemming rated him No. 4. Other, less noteworthy, Web sites were similarly profuse in their praise. The Omaha World-Herald described his commitment as the most significant for Nebraska since it obtained Tommie Frazier's signature in 1992.

In what might or might not have been a tip of the hat to tradition, Lucky was even given a No. 20 jersey. "Johnny Rodgers, right? I didn't know about him 'til I got here . . . well, until I got recruited," Lucky said early in training camp. "He's big. I wanted No. 20, keep the tradition going."

Internet chat rooms were abuzz. Clear a place in the trophy case, another Heisman is coming. The quiet guy from North Hollywood, Calif., is going to join Rodgers, Rozier and Crouch.

Though hyperbole resides in cyberspace, Lucky's numbers encouraged excess. Even those who understand the limitation of statistics in predicting success at a higher level had to take note of what he accomplished in high school. In the first round of the playoffs in Los Angeles, for example, he rushed for 301 yards and scored seven touchdowns. His 54 points were a city single-game record.

## AT A GLANCE

### Returning

Marlon Lucky	6-0, 210	So.
Cody Glenn	6-0, 230	So.
Brandon Jackson	5-11, 200	Jr.
Leon Jackson	6-1, 210	So.
Thomas Lawson	6-0, 230	So.

### Incoming

Kenny Wilson	6-0, 220	Jr.
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### Outlook

With versatile Cory Ross gone, the running backs operated by committee during spring practice. "We roll with the one that's hot," running backs coach Randy Jordan said following the Spring Game. "What it allows them to do is stay fresh during the course of the game." The committee was essentially a duo, Lucky and Glenn. But it will be expanded in the fall, with the return of Brandon Jackson, who was sidelined by continuing shoulder problems during the spring, and the arrival of Kenny Wilson.

Jackson saw limited action in his second season at Nebraska, after rushing for 390 yards and six touchdowns as a true freshman, while Wilson, yet another transfer from Butler County (Kan.) Community College, rushed for 1,292 yards and 14 touchdowns, on only 126 carries — 10 yards per carry — to earn junior college All-America recognition. He's a "big-play maker, great speed, hands, power," coach Bill Callahan said on letter-of-intent-signing day. "Interestingly enough, I just don't think we're deep enough (at the position), and I don't think you can have enough good backs."

Add Leon Jackson, who thought better of a post-spring decision to transfer, and Lawson, who also can play full-back, and "we've got a good stable of backs," Callahan said during the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference. "So we're very pleased with where we're at."

Glenn was second to Ross in rushing last season, but just barely. He and Lucky got 88 carries between them for 262 yards and four touchdowns, all by him. Each had moments. Glenn's best was at Baylor, where he carried 18 times for 52 yards and a touchdown as Nebraska played ball control. Lucky's best game was the first against Maine: 13 carries for 44 yards. The point is, neither played a lot.

Glenn was impressive in the spring, particularly running in contact, and Lucky improved in his ability to read blocks. Both had "great springs," said offensive coordinator Jay Norvell. "They're different players than they were . . . they made a lot of strides, and we're really pleased with their development."

Spring practice was good for Leon Jackson as well. All three "grew up," Norvell said. "They matured a little bit. I think we found out something about them."

Defending national champ USC was recruiting him, as were Florida, LSU and Washington. At the Baylor game on the weekend he visited Nebraska, fans chanted his



## 20 MARLON LUCKY

I-Back  
6-0/210

So./One Letter

North Hollywood, Calif.

Lucky showed flashes of the ability that made him a coveted 2005 recruit, playing in all 12 games as a true freshman. He rushed 43 times for 129 yards and averaged 20.8 yards on 13 kickoff returns.



## 34 CODY GLENN

I-Back  
6-0/230

So./One Letter

Rusk, Texas

Glenn emerged as a short-yardage back as a true freshman. After not playing in the first two games, he made his presence felt, rushing for 131 yards and four touchdowns in seven games.



## 32 BRANDON JACKSON

I-Back  
5-11/200

Jr./Two Letters

Horn Lake, Miss.

After a productive freshman season (390 yards and 6 TDs), Jackson was slowed by a shoulder injury in 2005. He missed spring practice while recovering from shoulder surgery.



## 23 LEON JACKSON

I-Back  
6-1/210

So./One Letter

Pasco, Wash.

Jackson began his career at safety and appeared in nine games on special teams. He also spent time at receiver, before moving to I-back, where he rushed for 52 yards in the Spring Game.



name. Three weeks later, after a loss at Iowa State, he announced he would sign a letter of intent with the Cornhuskers, a silver lining in an otherwise clouded weekend that initiated a season-ending three-game losing streak.

A subsequent Internet-driven rumor that he was wavering in his commitment to Nebraska sent some fans into a funk from which they wouldn't emerge until early February, when he finally signed. "Marlon is a franchise-type back, (with) the versatility and the completeness to do anything on the football field that he wants to do," coach Bill Callahan said on signing day. "He can run inside, outside, he's got all of the burst and explosion and the speed that you look for. He's got the whole package."

Even though his freshman season fell short of expectations — Adrian Peterson he wasn't — Lucky still has the whole package, tempered by experience. "You just see the progression," running backs coach Randy Jordan said following the Spring Game. "He's going to be a good back for us."

During the spring, Lucky became more physical in his running, proving he could "pour it in there," said Jordan. And he was doing a better job of finishing, taking what he could instead of trying to bounce outside as he was able to do in high school, against less athletic and slower defenders. Callahan emphasizes running north and south. "If it ain't there, just stick your head in there, get what can get," Lucky said. "If it's outside, you can get it outside. But they prefer inside."

And if you try to get it outside and don't? "You get chewed out," he said.

"Physical" was the spring watchword for the running backs, who took a constant pounding, as Callahan promised they would. At 6-foot and 230 pounds, fellow sopho-

## 36 THOMAS LAWSON

I-Back/Fullback  
6-0/230

So./One Letter

Parker, Colo.

Lawson adds depth at both I-back and fullback. A walk-on who red-shirted in his first season (2004), he had three carries (0 net yards) and caught one pass for 2 yards in the Spring Game.



more Cody Glenn is what Jordan calls a "hammer." So is Lucky. "He's not a small guy," Jordan said. In short-yardage situations, behind a young and improving offensive line, "we always expect those guys to get it."

By all indications, Lucky and Glenn finished the spring in a dead heat. The coaches wouldn't be drawn into singling out one or the other. Each brings strengths to the position. Lucky has "committed himself to getting better in so many ways," said Callahan. "You watch him run the ball physically between the tackles. You watch him break tackles outside. You see him make big runs."

Lucky also showed he could catch passes. In the final scrimmage before the Spring Game, he ran a "corner cut" and a "go-route on a rail that was, I think, one of the best routes . . . a couple of the best routes I've seen come out of the backfield. So his game is getting better," Callahan said.

Gruden had visited the day before. That practice had been just OK, said Lucky. ■





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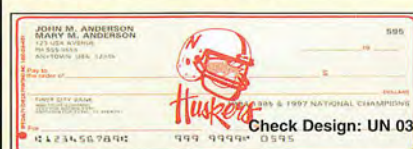
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**Dane Todd**





# Changes 'Pretty Extreme'

**H**is roommate had already checked into the dorm when Dane Todd arrived for the start of two-a-day practices in the late summer of 2002. The two freshmen had yet to meet.

They had both played in the Nebraska Shrine Bowl high school all-star game, but on opposite teams. And they had never competed against each other because their high schools were in different classifications. Todd was from Lincoln. Matt Herian was from Pierce.

"I didn't know who Matt was," Todd said. "I knew nothing about him. Nobody knew much about Matt. But after about two weeks of practice, everybody knew who Matt was."

"It didn't take long for us to realize Matt wasn't going to redshirt."

Todd, on the other hand, expected to redshirt. Back then, most Cornhusker freshmen redshirted and spent a season practicing on the scout team. That's how the system worked. And because there were few surprises, "I never really felt overwhelmed by the situation," said Todd.

"I was kind of awestruck by how athletic everybody was, how big and strong everybody was and how little I knew about the game of football. So my head spun in that respect. But I felt like I could compete with everybody there. I was just not quite on their level yet."

Todd's class of scholarship freshmen was heavy on offensive players, including four linemen: Jermaine Leslie, Kurt Mann, Jemayel Phillips and Cory Timm. Phillips, in particular, was physically imposing, at 6-foot-6 and 315 pounds. His nickname was "Big Smooth."

At 6-6, 255, Adam Carriker, among the handful of defensive players in Todd's class, was imposing, too, particularly since everyone knew he had played quarterback in high school.

The Cornhuskers recruited him as a defensive end, of course, and he'll be playing his senior season there, as an All-America candidate - which isn't that surprising. "You can tell by looking at some guys if they're going to make it," Todd said. "But other guys, you never know."

## AT A GLANCE

### Returning

Dane Todd	5-11, 235	Sr.
Grant Miller	6-0, 225	Sr.
Colton Koehler	6-1, 225	Fr.
Paul Farino	6-0, 270	RFr.
Will Otto	5-11, 235	Sr.
Matt Senske	6-3, 240	Jr.

### Incoming

Justin Makovicka	6-1, 225	Fr.
------------------	----------	-----

### Outlook

The position has been redefined in Bill Callahan's offense. A carry by the fullback now amounts to a trick play. There were no carries by the position last season and only three in Callahan's first season as coach, all by Steve Kriewald — including the surprise 48-yard jaunt to set up a late field goal and avoid a shutout at second-ranked Oklahoma. Even so, the fullback remains important to the running game, a focus during the spring after Nebraska ranked last in the Big 12 and 107th nationally in rushing.

During his pre-spring news conference, Callahan said he was concerned about the position because after the reliable Todd, a senior and returning starter, "we don't have a lot of great depth." Miller, though also a senior, has appeared in only two games during his career. The rest are walk-ons.

Thomas Lawson has practiced at both I-back and fullback, while Senske, a javelin and discus thrower on the track and field team, tried out for the team in Callahan's first season and worked on the scout squad as a linebacker before moving to fullback last fall. He "shows promise," said Callahan.

Makovicka, a preferred walk-on, will be following brothers Jeff and Joel from East Butler (Neb.) High School. Jeff and Joel both walked on and played fullback as well.

"Big Smooth" didn't make it, and neither did Leslie or Timm or Brandon Greeson or Curt Dukes or David

Horne. Dukes, who arrived early, would transfer to Duke and finish with a season of eligibility remaining. Horne, who played as a true freshman, would finish at Northern Iowa.

Oh yes, Fabian Washington didn't make it all the way through, either. He also played as a true freshman and left for the NFL, as a first-round draft pick, following his junior season.

"Guys leave for different reasons. It happens," said Todd. "Change happens."

The program in which he will play his final season is dramatically different from the one to which he committed in his senior year at Lincoln Southeast High School. The changes have been "pretty extreme," he said. The most obvious has been on offense. "I came to a full-time option program."

He and Grant Miller, who was listed as a fullback-linebacker, were Nebraska's last scholarship-recruit fullbacks. And their position's responsibilities have changed in the West Coast offense. For example, Todd has carried only three times during his Cornhusker career, all as a redshirted freshman. Nebraska's fullbacks carried a combined 65 times that season and scored seven touchdowns.

The fullback still blocks, but when he handles the ball, he does so as a receiver. Todd caught a few passes in high school, usually early in the season. Even though the pass plays to him were still called as the season went along, the quarterbacks "just stopped throwing the ball to me," he said.

He caught eight passes for 75 yards last season, and "I feel I'm getting better at it," he said. "I've been working on it. Just seeing the throws, more than anything, helps me out a lot. I can still improve. I plan to work on that this summer. I wouldn't say I was a good receiver. I would say serviceable."

The changes have continued as coach Bill Callahan installs his system. In the spring, for example, more emphasis was placed on tight ends lining up in the backfield as H-backs. That gives defenses different looks with shifting and motion. H-backs are tight ends "trying to play fullback," said



## 41 DANE TODD

**Fullback**  
**5-11/235**  
**Sr./Three Letters**  
**Lincoln, Neb.**

Todd played a key role as a blocker in the running game and as a receiver out of the backfield, with eight catches for 75 yards. He carried a perfect 4.0 cumulative GPA in biological sciences.



## 33 GRANT MILLER

**Fullback**  
**6-0/225**  
**Sr./One Letter**  
**Peabody, Mass.**

Miller, a highly regarded recruit from Massachusetts in the class of 2002, has seen limited game action in his Nebraska career. He played in two games last season as a junior.



Todd. "I'm still doing my own thing. They're doing what I do." And they did a good job of it during the spring. When someone struggled with footwork or reads, he would help. But that wasn't necessary very often.

The changes he has seen during his time at Nebraska have affected not just the offense but all aspects of the program, from the way strength training and conditioning are handled to the types of players being recruited. The changes "have been unreal. They're nothing I could have, or anyone could have, foreseen happening when I first committed," said Todd. "However, it has made me a better person adjusting to all of the changes, and a better football player because I've learned all these different systems."

Todd has learned a lot in the classroom, too. He carried a perfect 4.0 grade-point average in a biological sciences major and earned first-team Academic All-America honors, as did Mann, his recruiting classmate. Both received undergraduate degrees in May, finishing in four years. This summer, Todd is

preparing for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), which he will take in the fall. The eight-hour exam "is going to be basically the ultimate test to see what I've learned in college," he said.

He was learning before classes began, in what Callahan now calls training camp. Back then, preseason practice was called two-a-days because NCAA rules allowed teams to practice twice a day for two weeks before the regular one-practice-a-day routine when classes started. Not so now.

In addition, freshmen reported a couple of days before the rest of the team, a brief period of adjustment. When Todd's class tested in the 300-yard shuttle before two-a-days, Carriker got sick. "Nobody was in shape for that; we had just gotten off summer break," Todd said. "It happened to more than one guy. We didn't know what working out was. It was an eye-opener."

That changed quickly. But not everything did. Herian "was real quiet then, just like he is now," said Todd. ■



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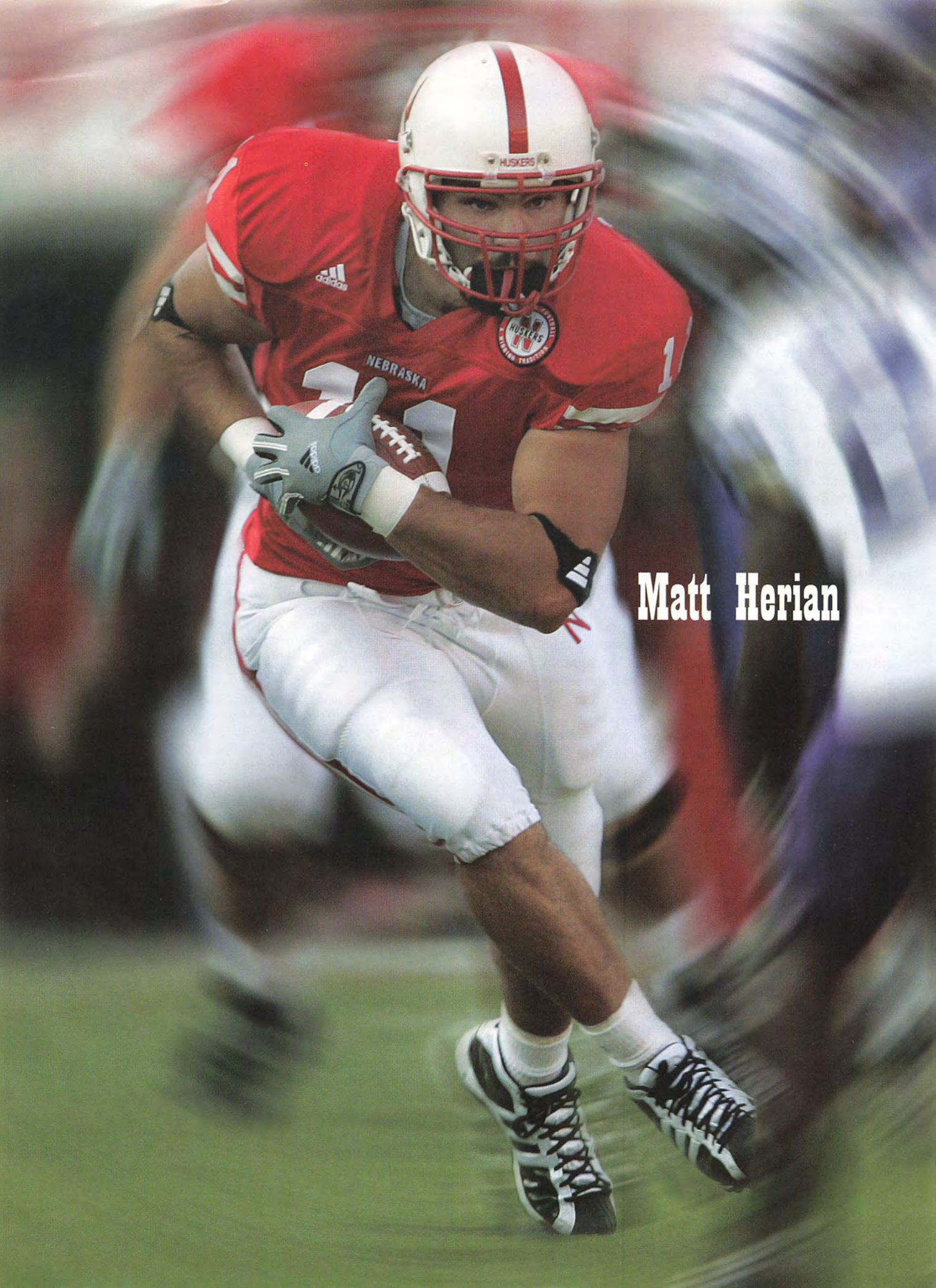
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**Matt Herian**



# Good Days And Bad

**L**ate January of 2005 . . . Matt Herian has discarded the crutches. The cast has just been removed from his wrist, replaced by a splint. Nearly three months have passed since the injury.

He was blocking downfield when teammate Cory Ross and Missouri linebacker James Kinney fell into him from behind. His left leg — two bones — and wrist were broken on the play. Surgery has repaired the damage, and he is determined to return for practice in the spring.

"That's what I'm shooting for," Herian tells the Lincoln Journal Star.

Determination isn't enough, however. Another surgery is required. It is performed in April, delaying his return until fall, at the earliest. That's optimistic as well. He doesn't return until Alamo Bowl practices, and then only on a limited basis. The uncertainty continues through the winter.

\*\*\*

Late March of 2006 . . . During his pre-spring news conference, coach Bill Callahan addresses a question to which he has responded many times: What is Herian's status? "We'll evaluate that on a day-to-day basis," Callahan replies. "We're not being cautious. We just want to be smart. We just don't want him to take a lot of wear and tear. We want to make sure he's ready to perform in the fall."

Being smart is necessary also because of a tweaked hamstring, which limits Herian during the spring. "He's a warrior. Matt really wants to succeed, wants to play again," tight ends coach Shawn Watson says after the sixth practice. "It'll be a process in getting better. So he keeps working hard."

"He just keeps focused on one day at a time. I'm excited to see him full-speed again because two years ago I thought he was one of the best (tight ends) in the country."

Watson was the offensive coordinator at Colorado then. Herian, a sophomore, was first-team All-Big 12 and a semifinalist for the John Mackey Award, catching 22 passes for 484 yards and three touchdowns. The year before, he caught seven passes, including an 80-yarder against Colorado.

\*\*\*

Early April of 2006 . . . A week before the Spring Game, Herian talks to reporters in an organized post-practice interview for the first time since the injuries occurred.

"I was doing fine until I tweaked the hamstring a little bit. Everything was looking just as good as it was before," he says. "So I was happy with my progress up until that point."

He considers the injury and lengthy recovery "just another bump in the road," he says. "Talking with some of the coaches, you've just got to take it in stride and just keep going. I can't get down on myself or anything like that. I'm on schedule to play this season. That's all I ask."

After uncertainty about his availability, which continues through the week leading up to it, Herian plays in the Spring Game, and more than just an appearance. "I thought it was

## At A Glance

### Returning

Matt Herian	6-5, 245	Sr.
Josh Mueller	6-5, 260	Jr.
J.B. Phillips	6-3, 250	Jr.
Clayton Sievers	6-4, 240	So.
David Harvey	6-4, 245	RFr.
Sean Hill	6-3, 255	Jr.
Andy Sand	6-2, 225	Jr.
Hunter Teafatiller	6-3, 220	So.
Justin Tomerlin	6-6, 265	So.

### Incoming

Mike McNeill	6-4, 215	Fr.
Dreu Young	6-5, 210	Fr.

### Outlook

In addition to welcoming back Herian, new tight ends coach Shawn Watson had a wealth of players with whom to work during the spring, including six — counting Herian — on scholarship and four walk-ons, though redshirted freshman Dan Glassman was listed at defensive end by the Spring Game. Despite the unusually high number of tight ends, by utilizing them in various ways, "you can really cause a lot of headaches" for the defense, Watson said, pointing to how he used Joe Klopfenstein and Quinn Sypniewski at Colorado last season. "They lined up everywhere. We didn't want them off the field."

At times during the spring, offensive alignments included three tight ends, with Phillips and Sievers working as H-backs, "where they can take over a fullback's role," said coach Bill Callahan. Phillips, the returning starter, caught 15 passes for 108 yards. Sievers caught six for 39 yards.

Mueller has only one career reception but could be on the verge of a breakout season. "He's a guy who has tremendous talent, stature, range," Callahan said.

Tomerlin, who appears to have settled in at tight end after beginning as a defensive end, and Harvey are coming off redshirt seasons, and McNeill will be a seventh on scholarship in the fall. Tight end is "where we have probably the best depth of any position on the team," said Callahan.

The position demands versatility. "Those guys have got to be pass receivers, run blockers, pass protectors," Watson said. "You've just got to utilize that talent. So you'll see us moving in that direction."

good to have him in there," Callahan says afterward. "It was good to see him get in there and compete."

Welcome back, Matt.

\*\*\*

Before the injury, Herian was on a fast-track to being the most productive tight end in Cornhusker history. He is already tied for fourth in career receptions by a Nebraska tight end, with 53, only eight from the leader, Jerry List (1970-72). And he is among just three Cornhusker tight ends with 1,000 career-receiving yards. With 58 more, he will pass



## 11 MATT HERIAN

**Tight End**

**6-5/245**

**Sr./Three Letters**

**Pierce, Neb.**

Herian, who missed last season after suffering a broken leg in the eighth game of 2004, returned to action in the Spring Game. A 2003 All-Big 12 pick, he has 53 career catches and 10 touchdowns.



## 85 J.B. PHILLIPS

**Tight End**

**6-3/250**

**Jr./Two Letters**

**Colleyville, Texas**

Phillips started 11 games as a sophomore. Known more as a blocker, he contributed 15 receptions for 108 yards. He had at least one catch in nine games, including three against Colorado.



## 81 JOSH MUELLER

**Tight End**

**6-5/260**

**Jr./Two Letters**

**Columbus, Neb.**

Mueller worked his way into the regular tight end rotation in 2005, appearing in all 12 games, starting three. He had one catch for 18 yards last fall and caught a touchdown pass in the Spring Game.



## 88 CLAYTON SIEVERS

**Tight End**

**6-4/240**

**So./One Letter**

**Elkhorn, Neb.**

Sievers played in all 12 games as a redshirt freshman and had six catches for 39 yards. He started three games, when Nebraska opened in a multiple-tight end formation.



Tracey Wistrom (1998-01) for first on the list.

Herian played as a true freshman and created a stir, almost from the beginning, even though he hadn't drawn as much attention as some in his recruiting class because he came from a Class C-1 high school football program in Pierce, Neb. But speed and athleticism aren't limited by a high school's size. As a senior, Herian finished third in his class in the 100 meters and second in the shot put.

Any questions about his speed that might have remained were answered during freshman testing before the start of practice at Nebraska, when he ran the second-fastest 40-yard dash, an electronically timed 4.67 seconds. Only cornerback Fabian Washington ran faster (4.61).

Herian played but he saw limited action as a freshman. He didn't play in the opener against Arizona State and sat out at Penn State. He caught only seven passes. But the receptions were good for 301 yards, an eye-popping average of 43 yards per reception, and four touchdowns.

He started every game as a sophomore and averaged 22 yards per catch, prompting running backs coach and passing game coordinator Tim Albin (who worked with the tight ends as a graduate assistant the previous season) to compare him to a 7/11 quick shop. He was open 24/7, Albin said.

He started off strong in Callahan's version of the West Coast offense, catching 15 passes in the first two games. But he only caught nine after that, as defenses began to focus on him.

The 6-foot-5, 245-pound Herian is "not your typical tight end, a guy who's that tall, who can move and jump like he can," said teammate Brandon Rigoni. "That's a challenge."

Rigoni had to deal with Herian in practice, as a scout-team safety.

"You watch him on film and there are things he can do

## 10 JUSTIN TOMERLIN

**Tight End**

**6-6/265**

**So./No Letters**

**San Clemente, Calif.**

Tomerlin, who sat out last season as a redshirt after suffering a shoulder injury, moved from defensive end to tight end. The 23-year-old sophomore had one catch in the Spring Game.



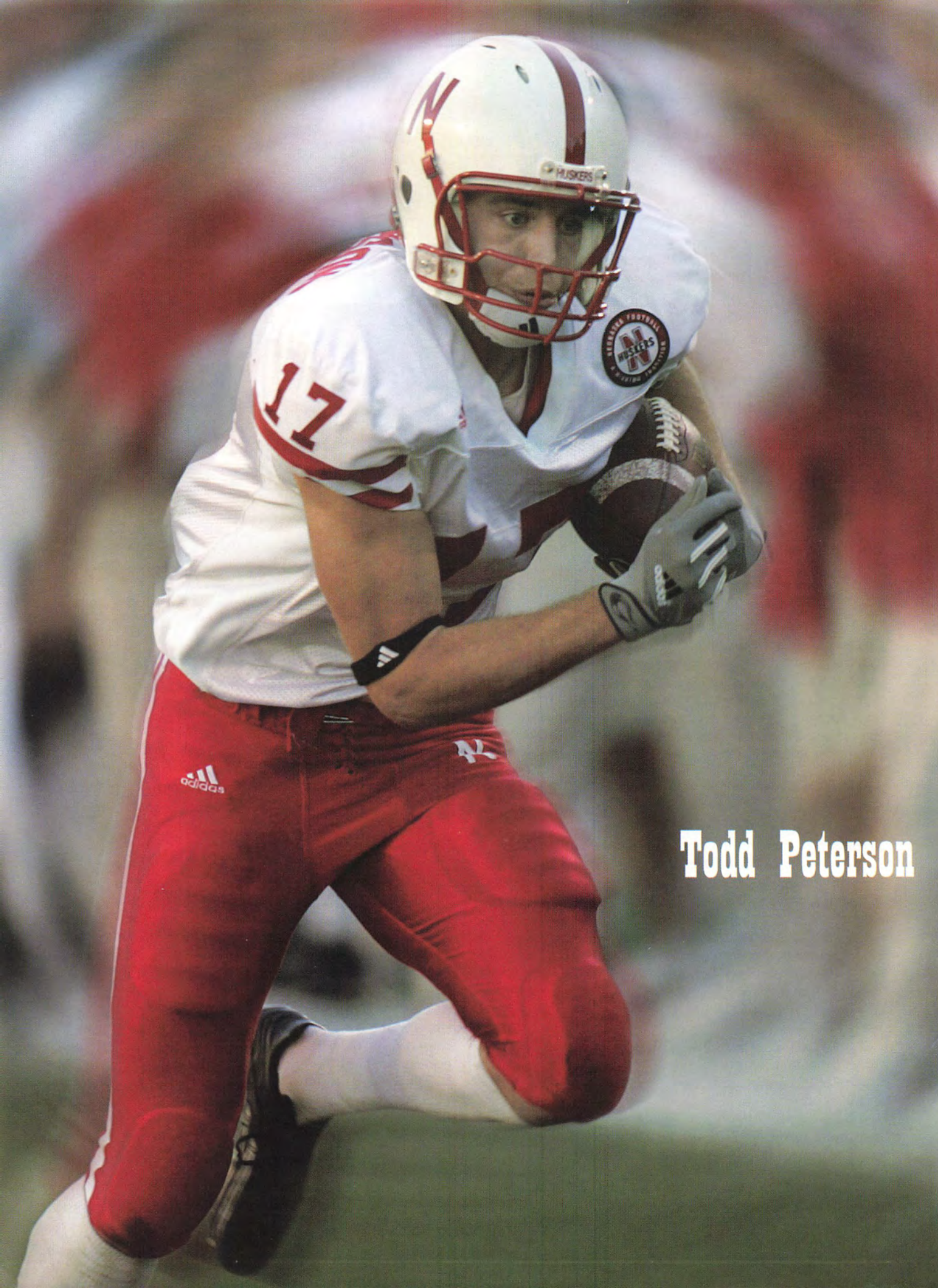
that you really kind of envy," J.B. Phillips said in the spring of 2005. Because of the smoothness with which he runs, "he has very deceptive speed, where on film, sometimes, it might not look like he's running that fast until he blows past somebody."

Herian expects to get that speed back by the time he steps on the field in the fall for his delayed senior season. "I think I can," he said. "I know I can. The doctor said there's no reason I shouldn't."

The past 20 months haven't been without frustration. "It's been up and down," said Herian. "There are good days and bad days. But I just kind of look back at the whole situation, you know . . . it probably made me better as a player and better as a person. So I just had to keep focused on the goal."

"I think it's taught me to be more patient, kind of appreciate the game. Like everybody says, it's always kind of cliché, but you take stuff for granted." ■





**Todd Peterson**



# Unexpected Success

**T**odd Peterson stood in the end zone for what seemed like forever, trying to attract Zac Taylor's attention. He must have been waving his arms. He didn't remember that. But his brother gave him a hard time afterward, wanting to know if jumping jacks were part of the play.

He also didn't remember dragging a foot after catching the pass. Friends said, "Man, you had a great toe-drag." He was surprised. "Toe drag? Was I that close to the back of the end zone?"

When Taylor finally saw him and released the pass, time accelerated. He acted on instinct. He didn't think about jumping for the ball and getting a foot down. He just did it. All that mattered was the result, his first catch at Nebraska and, more importantly, six points in a 23-14 victory at Baylor.

The next week at Missouri, his second catch also went for a touchdown, prompting friends to call him "Touchdown Todd." He doesn't block, they said, he just scores touchdowns.

He blocked, of course. Every Cornhusker receiver blocks or doesn't play.

Peterson would catch seven more passes by season's end. Though none of them went for touchdowns, he caught a two-point conversion pass to cut the deficit to 28-25 with 8:08 remaining in the Alamo Bowl game. At that point, however, he wouldn't have had any complaints, anyway.

His first season as a Cornhusker exceeded his most optimistic dreams. "I didn't expect to see this kind of success until at least my junior or senior season, maybe," he said.

Some people told him he wouldn't see any success if he walked on at Nebraska following a multi-sport career at Grand Island (Neb.) Central Catholic High School. They said he wasn't fast enough to play Division I-A football and should consider Nebraska-Kearney or Nebraska-Omaha.

Both of those schools offered scholarship aid, as did some others for basketball, his favorite sport growing up. He didn't begin playing organized football until the seventh grade, and he didn't decide that he could compete at a higher level in football until the summer before his senior year.

He was a quarterback until his sophomore year in high school. At a football camp the previous summer, the team needed a wide receiver. So he agreed to move, and never moved back.

In any case, people could question his abilities all they

### AT A GLANCE

#### Returning

Nate Swift	6-2, 195	So.
Terrence Nunn	6-0, 185	Jr.
Todd Peterson	6-4, 210	So.
Isaiah Fluellen	6-0, 185	Sr.
Frantz Hardy	6-1, 180	Jr.
Chris Brooks	6-2, 200	So.
Tyrell Spain	6-3, 190	Jr.
Wes Cammack	5-11, 190	RFr.

#### Incoming

Will Henry	6-5, 195	Fr.
Menelik Holt	6-4, 215	Fr.
Maurice Purify	6-4, 210	Jr.

#### Outlook

Outside of Nebraska, Nate Swift and Terrence Nunn are among the Big 12's best-kept secrets. Swift didn't catch a pass in three nonconference games, but he caught 45 against conference opponents, the third-highest single-season total in Cornhusker history. Only Johnny Rodgers, the 1972 Heisman Trophy winner, caught more, 55 and 53. Swift also led the team in receiving yards (641) and tied Nunn for the team lead with seven touchdown catches — Nebraska's most since 1992, when tight end Gerald Armstrong caught seven. Nunn was a consistent threat a year ago, with 43 catches for 495 yards.

Swift "has come out of nowhere," coach Bill Callahan said prior to spring practice. "He exudes confidence. He's a quiet young man, a very quiet and confident guy that goes on the field and does nothing but produce down after down after down. He's exciting to be around. And you look at his complementary receiver, Terrence Nunn, who's starting to show the maturity of a big-play wide receiver."

In addition, Hardy caught 25 passes for 349 yards and a touchdown, while Peterson, like Swift, was a pleasant surprise, providing the size that has been so important in recruiting.

The 2006 scholarship class included four wide receivers, two freshmen and two junior college transfers, including Spain, who went through spring practice. Purify, the other transfer, caught 68 passes for 1,318 yards and 19 touchdowns to earn junior college All-America honors.

"That posse of (new) wide receivers is the biggest group I've ever been around," said Callahan. "You need to have that type of stature, height and physicalness to compete in the Big 12. There's no doubt in our minds they'll be able to complement the players we have here and possibly upgrade in the future."

Fluellen, the only senior, remained healthy during the spring, after being hampered by a hamstring problem and playing in only four games last season. "The thing I'd be excited about if I were a fan is the depth and quality of wide receivers," Callahan said at an early-March fund-raiser.



## 87 NATE SWIFT

Wide Receiver

6-2/195

So./One Letter

Hutchinson, Minn.

Swift had a breakout season, leading the team with 45 catches for 641 yards and seven touchdowns. He had back-to-back 100-yard receiving games against Missouri and Oklahoma.



## 83 TERRENCE NUNN

Wide Receiver

6-0/185

Jr./Two Letters

Houston, Texas

Nunn developed into a dangerous dual threat, catching 43 passes (No. 2 on the team) for 495 yards and seven touchdowns and averaging 18.3 yards on punt returns. He has 18 career starts.



## 17 TODD PETERSON

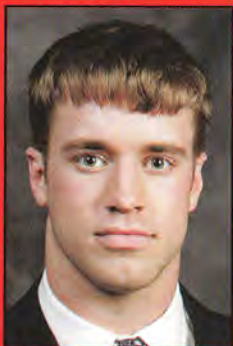
Wide Receiver

6-4/210

So./One Letter

Grand Island, Neb.

Peterson worked his way into the rotation as a redshirt freshman, finishing with nine catches for 150 yards and two touchdowns. He also had a key two-point conversion catch in the Alamo Bowl.



## 28 ISAIAH FLUELLEN

Wide Receiver

6-0/185

Sr./Three Letters

Ramstein, Germany

Fluellen, the only senior in the receiving corp, was hampered by a hamstring problem last season, limiting him to four catches in four games. He has 28 career catches and four touchdowns.



Scott Babin

Wide receivers Todd Peterson (17) and Nate Swift (87) celebrate after Peterson's touchdown catch against Baylor.

## 7 FRANTZ HARDY

Wide Receiver

6-1/180

Jr./One Letter

Miami, Fla.

Hardy, a junior college teammate of quarterback Zac Taylor, was in the starting lineup to open the season. He finished with 25 receptions to rank fifth on the team and had one touchdown.



wanted. They weren't going to dissuade him from walking on. "It's something you've got to take as a challenge, use it as motivation," Peterson said. "I just didn't want to pass up this opportunity, look back 10 years from now and say, 'What if?'"

In addition to the challenge, he couldn't pass on an opportunity to play for Nebraska. He grew up in the state and followed the Cornhuskers in the 1990s, when they won three national championships in coach Tom Osborne's final four seasons. In 1996, when their 26-game winning streak was snapped at Arizona State, he remembers "at school everybody was bummed. It affected everything," he said.

Peterson, a first-team academic all-conference honoree, went to Nebraska on an academic scholarship. When he played, that scholarship had to count against



## 23 CHRIS BROOKS

Wide Receiver

6-2/200

So./No Letters

St. Louis, Mo.

Brooks, one of 13 true freshmen to see action in 2005, was slowed by injuries for much of his first season at Nebraska. He saw action in four games, mostly on special teams.



## 80 TYRELL SPAIN

Wide Receiver

6-3/190

Jr./No Letters

San Diego, Calif.

Spain, originally a part of the class of 2005, spent that year getting his academics in order. He enrolled in January, went through spring practice and had one catch in the Spring Game.



the Cornhuskers' NCAA-maximum 85. This season, he'll have a football scholarship coach Bill Callahan told the Omaha World-Herald in early May.

Except among family and friends, Peterson was anonymous until the Baylor and Missouri games. Then people began recognizing him when he went out on weekends, and he started getting e-mails from other students, wanting to know if he was "really Todd Peterson?" Some of the e-mails came from those against whom he competed in high school, in track and field as well as in basketball and football. "It's pretty weird," he said. "But it's something you've got to appreciate." And he does.

During the off-season, he took his car in for maintenance at a garage in Grand Island and was asked to autograph a shop wall. "A lot of people back home notice me," he said.

No one has greater pride in his success than his family, of course. He has cousins in Illinois who are Nebraska season-ticket holders, he said, and their tickets are "always spoken for." His birthday present from brother Tyler, who lives in Chicago, included DVDs of the Baylor and Colorado games.

His parents didn't make the trip to Baylor. But they watched it on pay-per-view. Afterward, "the phone was ringing off the hook. My sister was calling me. My parents were trying to get a hold of me, friends... it's still pretty surreal when I think about it," he said months later.

So is the recollection of his first catch in the 2005 Spring Game, midway through the second quarter. He ran a 6-yard hitch. Joe Dailey threw the pass, which sailed, and he had to jump to catch it. He "just barely snagged it" before cornerback

Cortney Grixby up-ended him.

He landed on his back. "But it was well worth it," he said, adding, "I think."

Then he heard his name over the loudspeakers at Memorial Stadium.

"It just kind of hit me and took me back for a second," he said. ■



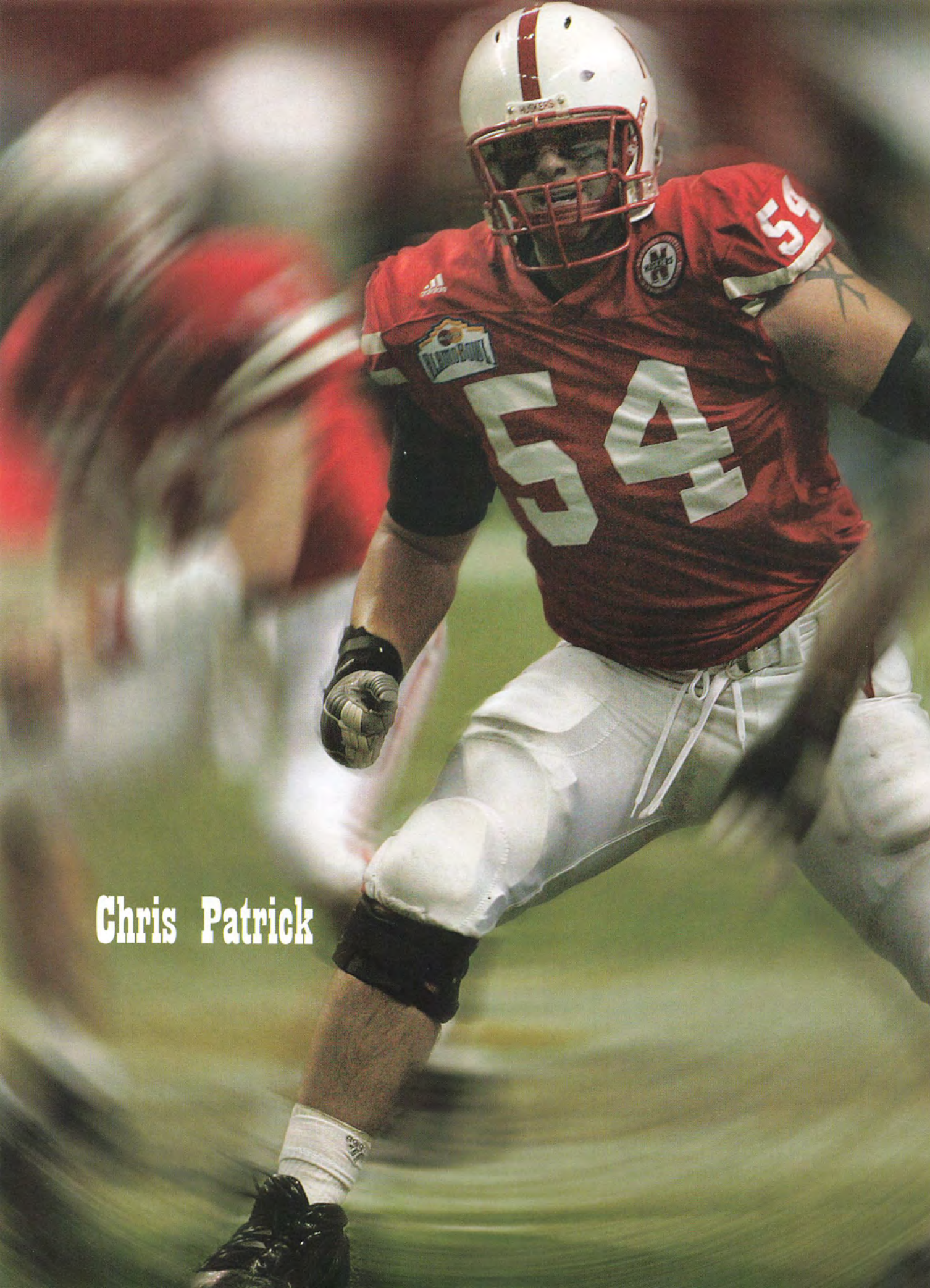
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**Chris Patrick**



# Commitment Tested

**N**ebraska played nine games without Chris Patrick last season, nine games. He could have played. He wasn't injured. But he never had an opportunity, even on special teams.

He never had an opportunity to play in the final 10 games of the previous season, either. He played a couple of snaps in mop-up duty near the end of the opener against Western Illinois, a clear-the-bench blowout. But that was it, the extent of what had been a promising Cornhusker career.

Patrick was on the road to nowhere. He had come to Nebraska as a defensive end, a highly regarded member of former coach Frank Solich's final recruiting class. In the spring of his freshman year, after red-shirting, he was moved to the offensive line by the new coaching staff.

The position switch wasn't as surprising as it might seem. His high school coach in Ithaca, Mich., always told him he might be moved to the offensive line. He had the frame and could carry the weight, like his older brother, Joe, who started eight games in Michigan State's offensive line in 2002.

"It runs in the family, I guess," Chris said. For those 19 consecutive games over two seasons, however, his position didn't much matter, except in practice. When the Cornhuskers played, he didn't. He watched from the sideline, or on television, because he wasn't a regular on the travel roster.

His commitment was tested during that time. Teammate Matt Slauson understands. "When you're practicing all season long, when you're just going through it, you start to get down. 'Why am I doing this? Why am I going out, breaking my body every day?' " Slauson said.

"Then, all of a sudden, they're telling you you're starting and you're free. I mean, you're like, 'This is it. This is what I've been working for.' I think at that moment, you're so stoked to play that nothing else matters. Your body feels great, and you're so psyched up that nobody can beat you."

Slauson wasn't talking about himself, though he could have been. Through nine games last season, he played primarily on the field goal team before starting against Kansas State. But he was talking about Patrick, how the coaches had picked him as the offensive line's MVP in the Kansas State game. Patrick,

## AT A GLANCE

### Returning

Kurt Mann	6-4, 290	Sr.
Chris Patrick	6-4, 290	Jr.
Matt Slauson	6-5, 335	So.
Lydon Murtha	6-7, 315	So.
Greg Austin	6-1, 290	Sr.
Andy Christensen	6-3, 300	So.
Mike Huff	6-4, 305	So.
Brett Byford	6-3, 305	Jr.
Brock Pasteur	6-6, 290	Jr.
Rodney Picou	6-4, 300	RFr.
Jordan Picou	6-2, 300	Jr.
Newt Lingenfelter	6-5, 280	Sr.
Victory Haines	6-7, 285	Jr.
Jacob Hickman	6-4, 280	Fr.
Conan Fredinburg	6-7, 310	RFr.

### Incoming

Cruz Barrett	6-4, 315	Fr.
D.J. Jones	6-5, 300	Fr.
Carl Nicks	6-5, 325	Jr.
Keith Williams	6-5, 310	Fr.

### Outlook

The offensive system has changed, but the tradition hasn't. As the offensive line goes, so go the Cornhuskers, who are looking to improve a running game that ranked 107th nationally and do a better job of protecting the quarterback. Zac Taylor was sacked 38 times in 2005. Only Iowa State's Bret Meyer was sacked more — one more time, to be exact. "We want to get back to the classic Nebraska offensive line," said Slauson, who started the final three games as a true freshman. "It's just a reputation that the Nebraska line had back when we were the dominant option team. Those guys were just nasty, big nasties. They could dominate, just grab guys . . . and that's the mentality we have to have."

The line again will be built around Mann, who has started every game at center the past two seasons. He was a second-team All-Big 12 selection and a first-team Academic All-American. With him sidelined in the spring, while recovering from shoulder surgery, Austin and Christensen divided time at center, along with Byford, as line coach Dennis Wagner continued to mix and match. Coach Bill Callahan, who coached the offensive line in the NFL, also got into the act, working with the linemen.

Austin started 10 games at left guard last season. Christensen had worked his way to the top of the depth chart at guard, only to be sidelined by a shoulder problem that required surgery. Huff also was in the regular rotation at guard during the spring, while Slauson, Patrick and Murtha spent their time at tackle with the top units. Nicks can play guard or tackle and is being counted on to contribute immediately.

"The expectations are there," Wagner said. "Instead of having six guys, we think we have 10 guys. We're excited about the depth we have."



## 50 KURT MANN

Center  
6-4/290

Sr./Two Letters  
Grand Island, Neb.

Mann, an Academic All-American and the starting center for all 23 games the past two seasons, was forced to watch from the sidelines in the spring while recovering from shoulder surgery.



## 54 CHRIS PATRICK

Offensive Tackle  
6-4/290

Jr./One Letter  
Ithaca, Mich.

Patrick emerged late last season, starting the final two games at left tackle. He was listed as a top backup at right guard heading into 2005 fall camp, but did not see action in the first nine games.



## 70 MATT SLAUSON

Offensive Tackle  
6-5/335

So./One Letter

Colorado Springs, Colo.  
Slauson, a late addition to the incoming freshman class, made an immediate impact. He appeared in nine games and started the final three games at right tackle.



## 76 LYDON MURTHA

Offensive Tackle  
6-7/315

So./One Letter  
Hutchinson, Minn.

As a redshirt freshman, Murtha made significant contributions to Nebraska's improved offensive line. He played in nine games last season with three starts at the left tackle position.



## 65 GREG AUSTIN

Guard/Center  
6-1/290

Sr./Three Letters  
Cypress, Texas

Austin provides experience and versatility. He played in all 12 games and started 10 at left guard in 2005, before dividing his time between guard and center in the spring.



## 62 ANDY CHRISTENSEN

Guard/Center  
6-3/300

So./No Letters  
Bennington, Neb.

Christensen worked his way to the top of the depth chart at guard a year ago, only to be sidelined by a shoulder problem that required surgery. He worked at guard and center in the spring.



## 61 MIKE HUFF

Offensive Guard  
6-4/305

So./One Letter  
Ralston, Neb.

Huff earned a letter as a backup a year ago and was in the regular rotation at guard in the spring. He was one of five in-state prospects in the 2004 class and redshirted his first season.



## 59 BRETT BYFORD

Center/Guard  
6-3/305

Jr./No Letters  
Hartselle, Ala.

Byford was one of four players to share time at center in the spring, with starter Kurt Mann sidelined after shoulder surgery. He has spent two seasons as a backup after redshirting in 2003.





## 78 BROCK PASTEUR

Offensive Guard

6-6/290

Jr./No Letters

Orlando, Fla.

Pasteur, one of two junior college prospects in the 2005 recruiting class, sat out last season as a redshirt. He moved into the offensive line rotation in the spring as a backup guard.



## 72 RODNEY PICOU

Offensive Guard

6-4/300

RFr./No Letters

Moreno Valley, Calif.

Picou, a highly touted member of the 2005 recruiting class, sat out last season as a redshirt after having shoulder surgery. He worked with the No. 2 offensive line at guard in the spring.



"CP," didn't start. But he played about half the game and graded the best of the lineman.

Some would have given up by then, but not Patrick. "I'd get down on myself sometimes, but I never lost focus," he said. "I kept working hard. My dad has always pushed me. He goes, 'Things aren't always going to go your way. But you've got to be ready to play when they call your name.'"

"I knew I could be an effective player. It was just getting the right techniques down and working hard at it. That's the biggest thing; I've always been a hard worker since high school."

Offensive line coach Dennis Wagner has never questioned Patrick's work ethic or his effort in practice. "But he can't get down on himself," Wagner said in the spring.

Patrick often got down on himself; he still does, but not as much. He has a difficult time letting go of a mistake or a poor play. He is a perfectionist, a characteristic he gets that from his dad, who got it from his dad. "That's where it all comes from. My grandpa is a hell of a worker," said Patrick.

He wants to be flawless in his technique. In an odd way, perhaps, that was part of the reason he wasn't playing. "Chris is hard on himself. That's what he's learning now," said Wagner.

"You've got to play the game within yourself. He's got to know his assignments. He's just gotten more comfortable. Now he's starting to learn the position, and that's the biggest thing. When you're confident in what you're doing, you can play hard and fast. When you're not confident, you play slow and cautious. He just got more and more confident as the season went on."

Patrick started the final two games against Colorado and Michigan and held the left tackle job through spring practice, rotating with Lydon Murtha, who started three games last season. Despite what his high school coach told him, he never imagined playing in the offensive line, much less tackle. He found out before training camp that he would be moving to tackle, after playing guard in the spring.



Offensive line coach Dennis Wagner says he's excited about the added depth in 2006.

## 75 VICTORY HAINES

Offensive Tackle

6-7/285

Jr./No Letters

Logan, Utah

Haines, an offensive lineman from Snow College in Ephraim, Utah, officially signed in December and enrolled in January. He worked his way into the rotation as a backup tackle in the spring.



Occasionally, he wonders what playing defensive end would be like. Sacking quarterbacks would be "sweet." Now, however, his job is to prevent sacks, which is "way harder," he said.

"For a defensive player, most is athletic ability; a little bit is mental. As an offensive lineman, you've got to be one of the smartest players on the field, picking up different protections, gap protections, man protections, stuff like that. You can't rely on your athletic ability like you can on defense."

Patrick remembers his first practices as an offensive lineman, how frustrating they were. He had to learn a complicated system, and he lacked size, weighing between 260 and 265 pounds.

Getting bigger and stronger was the easy part, with the help of strength coach Dave Kennedy and nutritionist James Harris. Learning the system wasn't, however.

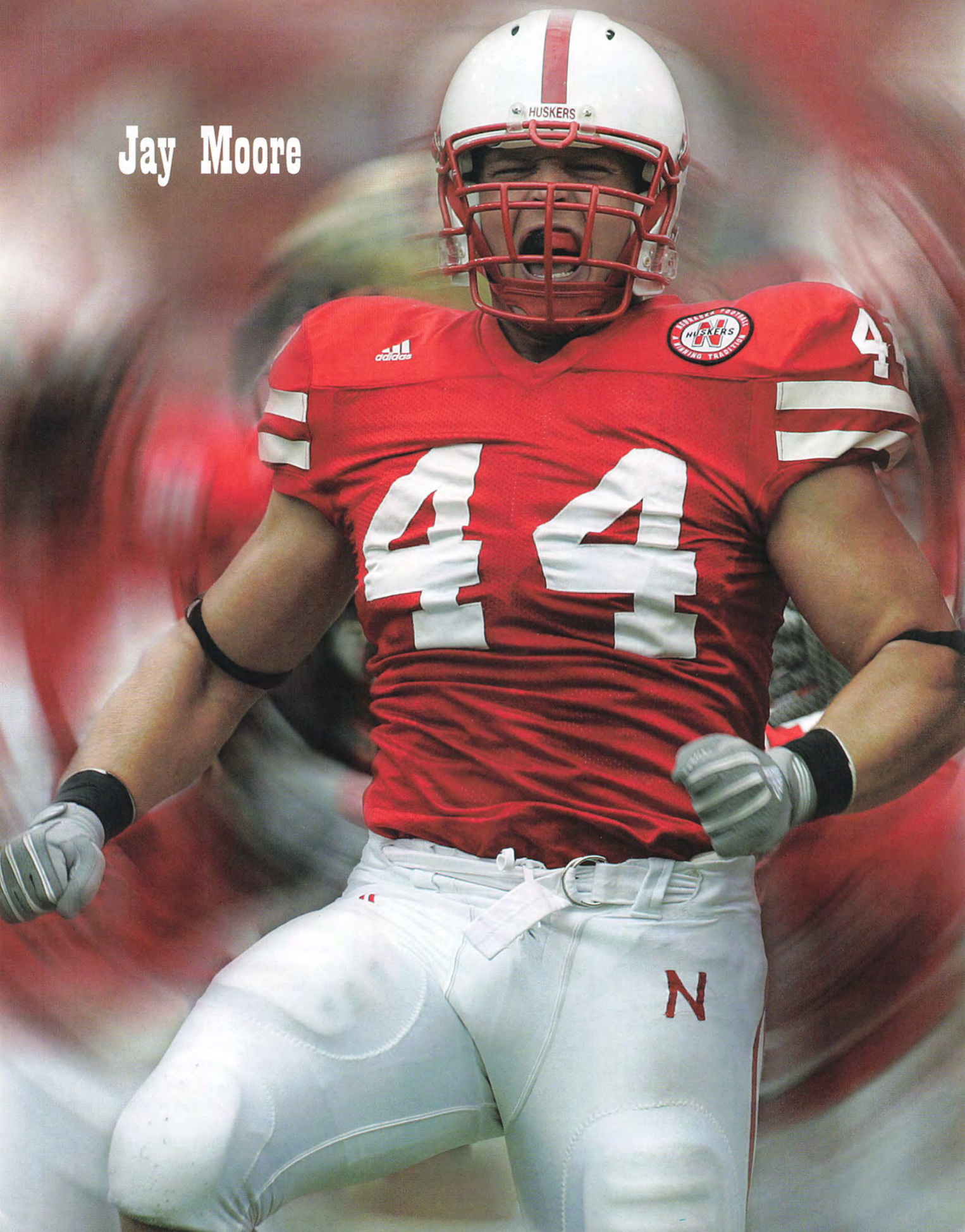
"It's crazy how fast things have changed. It really is," Patrick said.

Some might argue that not getting to play in 19 consecutive games over two seasons isn't fast, an indication that he is an optimist as well as a perfectionist.

"I can't explain all of it," he said, "but it's cool." ■



Jay Moore





# Taking Pride In His Hobby

**J**ay Moore's priority this summer is preparing for his final season at Nebraska. No surprise there. But he's also planning to play golf, a lot of it, whenever he has some free time.

He's hooked on golf. He's been playing seriously for about three years now, approaching it with the same determination that characterizes his play at defensive end.

Moore never imagined it would come to this. The first time he played golf, he was, in his own words, "just horrible at it." But a decent shot or two drew him back. "I had a blast doing it," he said. "Being an athlete, being a competitor, I hated not being good. So I said, 'I'm going to get good.'"

The summer allows for the practice time to do that. He'll spend as much as three hours on the driving range and then, before calling it quits, work on his short game and putting. And if he's really struggling with his swing, he'll solicit advice. "I do take it pretty seriously," he said.

He's "not too bad" from tee to green. He's a big hitter off the tee, no surprise given his size. And his short game is all right. But "where I fall short sometimes is putting," said Moore.

"I haven't played enough to really putt well. Once I get on the green . . ."

Any golfer could complete that sentence. Despite such frustrations, however, golf is "relaxing, just to get your mind away from the constant running and working out," Moore said.

He and Adam Carriker are among

## At A Glance

### Returning

Adam Carriker	6-6, 295	Sr.
Jay Moore	6-4, 280	Sr.
Barry Turner	6-3, 250	So.
Zach Potter	6-7, 275	So.
Dan Glassman	6-4, 245	Fr.
Kevin Luhrs	6-1, 260	Jr.
Andy Poulosky	6-2, 260	Jr.
Thomas Rice	6-1, 240	Jr.
Tony Sullivan	6-3, 235	Jr.

### Incoming

Pierre Allen	6-5, 222	Fr.
Ben Martin	6-4, 265	Fr.
Mike Smith	6-6, 260	Fr.

### Outlook

The trio of Carriker, Moore and Turner is as good as any in the conference, if not the country. All are outstanding pass rushers, with differing styles, "one with power (Carriker), one with a combination (Moore) and one with pure speed (Turner)," coach Bill Callahan said.

They combined for 18 1/2 of the Cornhuskers' nation-leading 50 sacks last season. Carriker led the way with 9 1/2, despite playing base end in a new alignment. Because the base end is constantly confronted with double-team blocking, it's "a very tough position to produce a lot of sacks," said Callahan. "I would tell you that's a credit to Adam and what he's accomplished at that spot."

With a year's experience, Carriker should be an even more formidable base end. The same is true for Moore and Turner on the open side. Like Carriker, Moore and Turner are bigger, stronger and faster. Turner, who earned freshman All-America recognition, "was fast when he first got here, but he's even more explosive," said Moore. "He's gotten a lot faster."

Potter was hampered by a neck stinger last season and played primarily on kicking teams. But his potential is such that Ty Steinkuhler was moved to defensive tackle in the spring.

the leaders on defense, by virtue of being fifth-year seniors and return-

ing starters. They assumed leadership roles during winter conditioning.

"I think it's just part of the territory. We've never talked about it," said Moore. "We know that to get this team where it needs to be, we're going to have to provide some pretty good leadership."

His leadership model is that provided by Grant Wistrom and Jason Peter, the defensive co-captains during the Cornhuskers' 1997 national championship season. He and Carriker "are going to try to do that, lead the team back to the top of the Big 12 again," Moore said.

Growing up in Nebraska, Moore followed the Cornhuskers "ever since I knew what football was about," he said. And he was a "huge fan" of Wistrom, a two-time consensus All-American and Academic All-American as well as the Lombardi Award winner as a senior.

He's still a Wistrom fan. He's partial to the Seattle Seahawks because of Wistrom, and a photo of Wistrom hangs in his locker, along with photos of other NFL defensive ends Dwight Freeney, Julius Peppers and Patrick Kerney. The photos motivate him to prepare harder.

"Sometimes you don't feel like working out or doing a whole bunch and you see them in your locker and you think, 'If I'm going to be like them, I've got to put in the work,'" said Moore.

Next to the four photos, he has posted the words: "To get where you've never been before, you have to do things you've never done before." The words provide motivation as well.



## 90 ADAM CARRIKER

Defensive End

6-6/295

Sr./Three Letters

Kennewick, Wash.

Carriker, a first-team AP All-Big 12 pick and NU's 2005 defensive MVP, is positioned for a dominant senior season. He led the Huskers in sacks (9.5) and ranked second in tackles for loss (17).



## 44 JAY MOORE

Defensive End

6-4/280

Sr./Two Letters

Elkhorn, Neb.

Moore had a strong 2005 season, recording 14 tackles for loss to help NU rank No. 1 in sacks and tackles for loss. He earned honorable-mention All-Big 12 accolades from the league's coaches.



## 98 ZACH POTTER

Defensive End

6-7/275

So./One Letter

Omaha, Neb.

Potter played in every game as a true freshman, contributing primarily on special teams, as he used his 6-foot-7 height and athleticism to block a field goal and an extra point.



## 99 BARRY TURNER

Defensive End

6-3/250

So./One Letter

Antioch, Tenn.

Turner made a huge impact as a pass-rush specialist as a true freshman. His six sacks tied for the national lead among freshmen and were the best in school history by a Husker freshman.



His time at Nebraska has gone quickly, despite a slow start. He arrived hoping he might play as a true freshman. In fact, that's one of the reasons he became a defensive end.

He was the state's Class B offensive player of the year as a junior at Elkhorn High School, rushing for 1,742 yards and 31 touchdowns. He played in only five games as a senior because of an ACL injury and still rushed for 822 yards and 16 touchdowns. He also played linebacker, but because of the impressive offensive numbers, then-coach Frank Solich offered a choice: tight end or defensive end.

Nebraska had more depth at tight end, so Moore picked defensive end.

The decision to redshirt him wasn't made until a couple of weeks into the season. But it was apparent early on that he wouldn't be playing, even though he practiced some with the second team. That he didn't get to suit up for the first couple of home games was a clear indication he was going to be redshirted. He didn't want to use a season of eligibility being a just-in-case player, anyway.

Redshirting was humbling. When the Cornhuskers played on the road, he would go home and attend high school games and have to answer questions about why he wasn't with the team.

His second season was more frustrating. He didn't play, not one down, because of injuries. Having to wait two years "really just made me appreciate the game more because I couldn't be out there. I looked at it as a time to get better," he said. "I think in the long run, it'll help me

out."

In the spring before his sophomore season, he weighed 262 pounds. One day, John Blake, his new position coach, was "messaging around" with him and said: "We'll get you up to 275."

Moore said, all right, he would see what he could do about gaining some weight. "I want to get up around 270, maybe a little above, just get real big, real strong," he told a reporter at the time.

He wasn't messing around. He was serious. He played at about 270 pounds last season, and this spring he weighed in at 282. He was stronger, and he hadn't lost any speed. He was timed in the 40-yard dash in 4.8 seconds. His goal is to get his time down to 4.7 by next season.

One day during winter conditioning he and some teammates were walking from Cook Pavilion back to the locker room in the South Stadium, talking about how "it seemed like we were just in the dorms. It's kind of crazy because of all the stuff we've been through, especially my class," said Moore.

"It's been a blast, though. I'm excited for the season. We're going to have a hell of a team. I want to go out and have a great year, pump up my chances as far as the NFL. That's a goal, too."

Another, though lesser, goal is to continue to improve his golf game.

"If it's nice, I'm usually out beating balls on the range or playing somewhere," he said. "I take pride in my golf game. That's my hobby. You can't just work out." ■



Bob Devaney, 1915-1997



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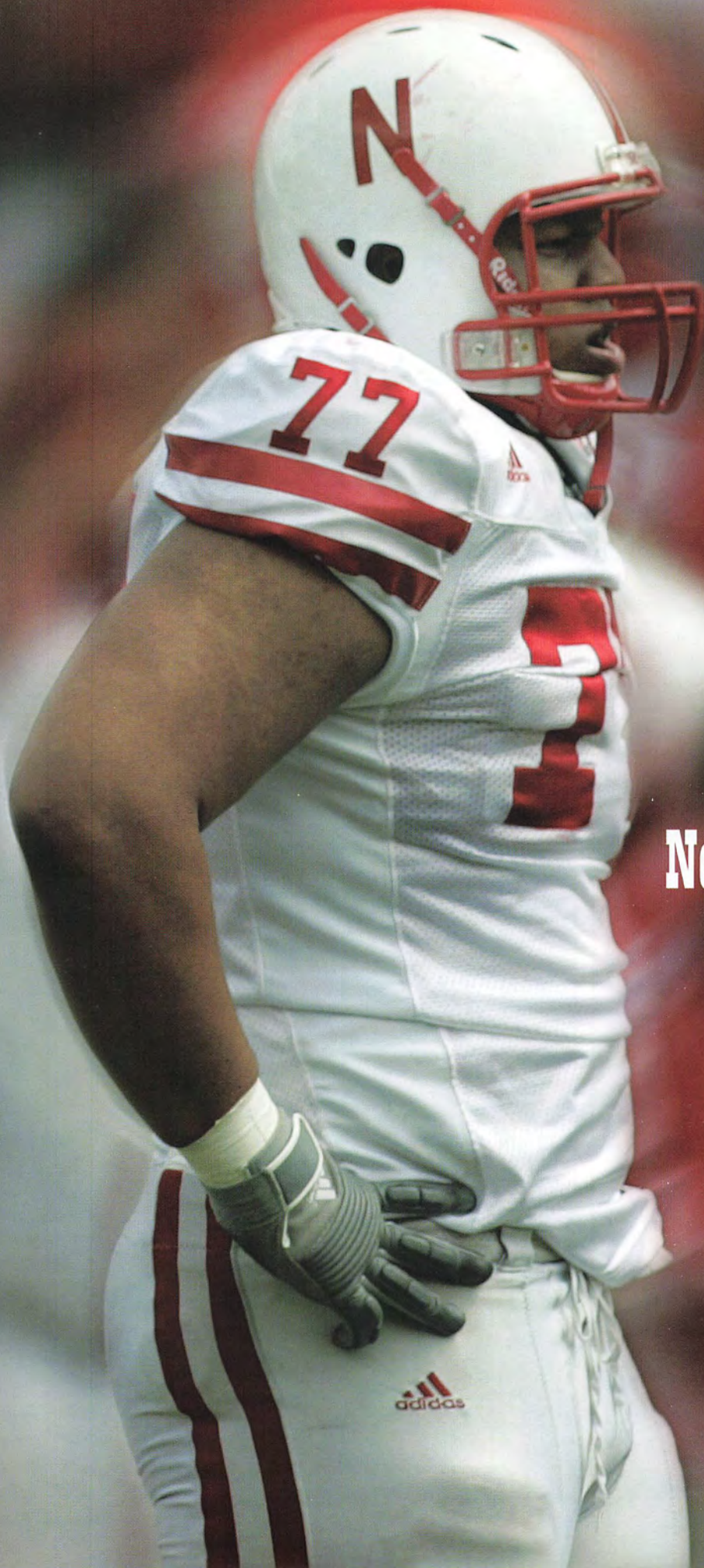
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**Ndamukong Suh**



# Great Expectations

**B**efore an interview after a late-spring practice, Ndamukong Suh ran the length of the field and back at the insistence of his position coach John Blake, who watched from the south end zone.

The scene reflected what Blake had said about the young nose tackle at the start of spring: "He's still a freshman, so I'm going to ride him pretty hard. We expect a lot out of him."

Even at a distance, as he approached the north goal line before making the turn and heading back, Suh was imposing, his 6-foot-4, 320-pound frame casting a giant shadow across the field.

Suh represents the future of the defensive line. He's definitely the biggest and probably the strongest on the line. And he "has as much ability as all of them," said Blake. "But he lacks experience."

The value of experience is better described by context than defined.

"When you get in that third quarter, you're tired, man, things are going around, the crowd's screaming, you've got to fight, dig down deep," Blake said. "It's almost that you have to go to a spot of straining and competing to understand how to react when you get there."

Suh hasn't been in that spot. He made brief appearances in two games last season before a knee injury sidelined him. The injury occurred in high school, while playing basketball, Suh said. He went up to dunk and came down wrong. The problem resurfaced during a developmental practice last fall.

He underwent surgery and could have returned to action late in the season. Not doing so preserved the possibility of petitioning for a medical hardship and another season of eligibility.

However, "I'm just looking at the near future right now, working on the near future. Hopefully, I won't have to use that year. But it's always great to (be able to) get it back," said Suh.

Like many, if not most, of his teammates, Suh's dream is to play at the next level, preferably sooner rather than later. And he has the size, strength and athleticism to do so.

Since the day he arrived from Grant High School in Portland, Ore., he has been pegged for stardom. In fact, the peg was inserted in the star column when he signed a letter of intent. He was among the prize players in coach Bill Callahan's highly ranked second recruiting class.

Defensive end Barry Turner, his freshman roommate, gushed with early-season praise, describing his strength

## At A Glance

### Returning

Ola Dagunduro	6-2, 300	Sr.
Barry Cryer	6-2, 280	Sr.
Ndamukong Suh	6-4, 320	So.
Ty Steinkuhler	6-3, 275	So.
Craig Roark	6-2, 300	RFr.

### Incoming

Seth Jensen	6-3, 275	Fr.
Brandon Johnson	6-3, 312	Jr.

### Outlook

The defensive interior was a significant factor in Nebraska's leading the nation in sacks and tackles-for-loss. "A lot of sacks are generated because of the inside push," Callahan said. "So it'll be important for us, if we're going to maintain what we're doing from a pressure perspective, to create that push and that press inside the pocket to make that (quarterback) move . . . to get those edge sacks."

Le Kevin Smith and Titus Adams were instrumental in getting the necessary push, as well as providing some of the sacks themselves. Dagunduro and Cryer gained valuable experience in a regular rotation. Both were credited with sacks against Michigan in the Alamo Bowl. Dagunduro also picked up a Chad Henne fumble and returned it 13 yards to set up the winning touchdown.

"We never felt bad when Ola was in the game; we didn't drop off any," said Blake.

By his own admission, Dagunduro went through a lull about mid-season, however. "Up to about game six I thought I did pretty well," he said. After that, "when I watched myself on film, I looked a little sluggish." Blake saw it, too, noting, "I don't think he played like he should have."

At that point, Dagunduro probably realized he wasn't going to take the nose tackle's job away from Smith, a fifth-year senior and three-year starter, Blake said. So he was satisfied with a supporting role, spelling Smith when called on. But "I told Ola that's totally unacceptable."

Dagunduro responded by finishing strong against Colorado and Michigan.

Cryer was used primarily in the nickel package. Now, however, he'll be an every-down player, which means he has had to get bigger and stronger. He was 10 to 20 pounds heavier in the spring.

Steinkuhler moved inside during the spring, after backing up Adam Carriker at base end. He's getting bigger and stronger, too, and "his quickness will give him a chance," Blake said.

Johnson, who comes from the same junior college as Dagunduro, is being counted on to join the mix. "You always want numbers," said Blake. "You'd like to have four or five deep." Or more.

"If we've got five or six guys playing, we'll be OK," he said.



## 94 BARRY CRYER

**Defensive Tackle**

**6-2/280**

**Sr./One Letter**

**Marrero, La.**

Cryer saw action in all 12 games, serving as Titus Adams' backup at defensive tackle. He finished with six tackles, including four tackles for loss for 16 yards, and also had two quarterback hurries.



## 54 OLA DAGUNDURO

**Nose Tackle**

**6-2/300**

**Sr./One Letter**

**Inglewood, Calif.**

Dagunduro was chosen as the winner of Nebraska's "Finisher" Award after 2005 spring ball and became senior Le Kevin Smith's top backup, recording two sacks and four tackles for loss.



## 43 TY STEINKUHLER

**Defensive Tackle**

**6-3/275**

**So./One Letter**

**Lincoln, NE**

Steinkuhler, the son of former Husker All-American and 1983 Outland Trophy winner Dean Steinkuhler, moved inside during the spring, after backing up Adam Carriker at base end last year.



## 77 NDAMUKONG SUH

**Nose Tackle**

**6-4/320**

**So./No Letters**

**Portland, Ore.**

Suh made brief appearances in two games last season before a knee injury sidelined him. He worked at both inside spots early in the spring, before settling in at nose tackle.



as "unbelievable" and adding, "He can do things I've never seen anybody in my life do."

Senior Ola Dagunduro, whom Suh backed up in the spring, also used "unbelievable" to describe his strength. In addition, he's "fast for someone that big," Dagunduro said. "He's ready."

Blake would disagree, of course. Initially, the plan was for Suh to work at both tackles, which he did the first week of spring drills. After that, however, he settled in at nose tackle, a position to which his size and strength are well-suited, "where you've got to be a 'man,'" said Blake.

Suh played the other tackle, the "three technique," before his knee surgery, competing with Barry Cryer for the job as the top back-up. Nose tackle isn't significantly different. "You're a lot closer to the center, and you've got to be ready. You don't have that split-second of time where you can re-adjust something like at the 'three,'" Suh said. "You've got to be on your game at the 'one.'"

The nose tackle also is more likely to face a double-team block. The positions are "similar, but I'd say you get a little more of a pounding on the nose, just because you're going on the center," he said. "The center is that much closer to you and the guard as well. So there's a little difference."

Even before the knee injury sidelined him, Suh was frustrated, as most young players are. In high school he played on the offensive line as well and rarely came out of games. Then "you come to college, and you get a couple of plays here and there," he said. "But it's a learning process."

"I knew I was coming into that. You've got to earn your way into the game."

He might have been better prepared than some true freshmen, Suh said, because his high school coaches constantly reminded him he wouldn't be able to take plays off at the collegiate level.

He admits occasionally taking a play off when he was younger because he could physically overwhelm opponents, just "push somebody over" if they were in his way.

By the time he finished, however, he had learned "you've got to go full-go, even though you were murdering those kids in high school. I learned that mentality definitively, knowing I had to come and do that here," he said.

Suh's goal in the spring was to become comfortable with the system so that it would be "second-nature, get everything down pat so I don't have to think to react; I just react."

Apparently he accomplished his goal. Against the first-team offensive line in the spring game "he was quite disruptive many times down on the goal line, (as well as) in normal down-and-distance situations. He was a load," said Callahan. "He was a load to block the entire spring."

Blake rode him hard, particularly early in the spring, letting up only because "I'm getting more acquainted, I know exactly what I have to do," Suh said the day he had to run after practice.

But Blake was "still there, right on my butt, any little thing, yelling at me, telling me what I have to do and yelling at the same time, coaching me," he said. "It's a good combination." ■



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**Stewart Bradley**





# Rehab And Focus

It is what it is.

As far as Stewart Bradley knows, that phrase, often heard among his Cornhusker teammates, originated with a rapper, though he couldn't say which one.

The origin doesn't matter, except when someone asks. What matters is the phrase helped him deal with a season-ending knee injury suffered against Texas Tech in early October. He realized feeling sorry for himself wasn't going to help him recover and get back on the field.

It is what it is.

And because it is, or was, "you've just got to do what you've got to do," he said, offering a similar, circular sentiment. What he had to do was rehab and focus on his senior season.

Bradley hasn't watched the play on which the injury occurred. He took an awkward step and the knee gave out. "I was like, 'This is gone,'" he said. When he got to the sideline, however, the knee seemed stable and he felt no pain. So he went back into the game — for half a series.

Covering a receiver on a "hitch route," he planted his left leg to cut and crumpled to the turf. "I was trying to get off the field, thinking, 'This is embarrassing,'" he said.

A couple of weeks later, after the swelling went down, the knee was surgically repaired. The rehab lasted four and a half months, he said. "I felt like I came back pretty fast."

Even so, time slowed down. It began to drag. Each day, while the team practiced, he went through rehab exercises and, to put it indelicately, felt "like a piece of crap."

But it is what it is.

Though he didn't feel that way then, time really dragged his first season. He walked on with the promise of a scholarship in the spring of his freshman year and played on the scout team. Older players were quick to offer advice, albeit tongue-in-cheek. They told him not to redshirt. "Trust me, Stew, just get started," they said. "Man, you've got five years, no way. It's so long."

They were right. The first year seemed like three. But when he got to play, time sped up. And when he became a starter, "there weren't enough games in the season," he said.

Bradley started at strongside linebacker as a sophomore, after playing in every game on special teams and as a back-up defensive end when he was a redshirted freshman. He had been a middle linebacker on the scout team, though he had expected to play weakside linebacker

## AT A GLANCE

### Returning

Stewart Bradley	6-4, 245	Sr.
Corey McKeon	6-1, 225	Jr.
Steve Octavien	6-0, 240	Jr.
Bo Ruud	6-3, 230	Jr.
Lance Brandenburg	6-1, 230	Jr.
Phillip Dillard	6-1, 250	So.
Dontrell Moore	6-2, 225	Sr.
Nick Covey	6-2, 235	RFr.
Mark O'Shea	5-11, 225	Sr.
Brian Voges	6-2, 225	Jr.
Tyler Wortman	6-3, 230	So.

### Incoming

Steve Allen	6-2, 230	Jr.
Kyle Moore	6-1, 208	Fr.

### Outlook

With everyone healthy, defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove has what he considers possibly as good of a group of linebackers as he has ever coached, with two-deep at every position. McKeon was the only starter in the opener who was still in place for the bowl game. Octavien played one quarter in the opener before being lost for the season. Bradley was lost in the fifth game. And Ruud missed the Alamo Bowl. In addition, Brandenburg was hampered by injuries early in the season, and Dillard had to play through a turf toe.

Bradley, a third-year starter on the strongside, is a team leader, the only senior among the top six. McKeon, who was credited with a team-high 98 tackles, also emerged as a leader in the middle. "He's as fun as all get-out," said coach Bill Callahan. "This is a guy who can get after people." His numbers: 22 tackles for losses, three interceptions, seven sacks, seven pass break-ups and 11 hurries.

Despite his brief time on the field, Octavien has shown an ability to play sideline-to-sideline. "He's got good range. He can break and burst on the ball and make plays," Callahan said. "And then, of course, he's just a great rally guy to be in the huddle with. He's got great temperament and demeanor on the football field." Even so, he'll have to hold off Ruud for the starting weakside job.

Ruud was third on the team with 80 tackles, including 14 for losses, and he had 10 hurries. He and Octavien will "make each other better, so they'll expect competition," said Cosgrove. "They've got a good working relationship. We've got to find ways of getting those guys on the field."

Brandenburg could get on the field at any of the linebacker spots. He began playing in the middle, started the Alamo Bowl on the weakside and then played strongside during the spring.

Dillard played as a true freshman, backing up McKeon and starting one game. He's the heaviest of a group that relies on speed and quickness over bulk to disrupt opposing offenses.



## 15 STEVE OCTAVIEN

**Weakside Linebacker**

**6-0/240**

**Jr./No Letters**

**Naples, Fla.**

Octavien earned the starting **WILL** linebacker position during fall camp a year ago, but his season was cut short by a broken leg suffered during the second quarter of the season opener.



## 13 COREY McKEON

**Middle Linebacker**

**6-1/225**

**Jr./One Letter**

**Naperville, Ill.**

McKeon had a breakout season in 2005 leading the team with 98 tackles. He also led NU with 22 tackles for loss and three interceptions, and his seven sacks ranked second.



## 51 Bo RUUD

**Weakside Linebacker**

**6-3/230**

**Jr./Two Letters**

**Lincoln, Neb.**

Ruud started the final 10 regular-season games at **WILL** linebacker, before a broken arm sidelined him for the Alamo Bowl. He ranked third on the team with 80 tackles and scored two touchdowns.



## 38 PHILLIP DILLARD

**Middle Linebacker**

**6-1/250**

**SO./One Letter**

**Tulsa, Okla.**

Dillard was one of 13 true freshmen to see action in the 2005 season. He played in 11 games, starting at Missouri when NU opened with four linebackers, and finished with 11 total tackles.



when he came to Nebraska.

He was a defensive back at Highland High School in Salt Lake City, as a junior anyway. He didn't play as a senior because of a broken right foot, suffered playing rugby. Nebraska became interested while recruiting high school teammate Haloti Ngata, a defensive tackle who went to Oregon — where he earned All-America recognition and was the Baltimore Ravens' first-round pick in this year's draft.

At Nebraska, "with the old staff, everyone redshirted," said Bradley, who was still recovering from the broken foot when practice began his freshman year. "You kind of expected it."

Actually, four scholarship freshmen played in 2002: David Horne, Mark LeFlore, Matt Herian and Fabian Washington, the only defensive player who didn't red-shirt.

Even though the class was heavy in offensive players (11 of 15 freshmen), "we had a fun little group, a pretty good defensive squad on the scout team that year," Bradley said. The scholarship players included Adam Carriker, Jay Moore and Andrew Shanle, and "we were



Middle linebacker Corey McKeon had 11 tackles in the Alamo Bowl and finished with a team-leading 98.

pretty disruptive."

Bradley found himself matched in practice against offensive linemen such as Wes Cody, John Garrison and Nate Kolterman, "some big dudes," he said.

He was a big dude, too, at least for his position. He weighed 225 when he arrived, but he was 260 in the spring of his freshman year, when he shed his walk-on's anonymity. He drew attention in the Spring Game by making nine tackles, which included some big hits. Then-defensive coordinator Bo Pelini said afterward that Bradley would contribute in the fall, on special

teams for sure. "That's the first time the public got to see me. 'Who is this kid?' It was fun because I was new to people," he said.

His move to defensive end that season was a result of Trevor Johnson's being hampered by injury. He knew he would return to linebacker eventually, however. "I was never a defensive end," said Bradley, who played at 250 then. "I was in there to rush, but we didn't do a lot of pass rushing."

Nebraska's defensive philosophy was different. "I remember we used to get in so much trouble if we ever



## 34 STEWART BRADLEY

Strongside Linebacker

6-4/245

Sr./Three Letters

Salt Lake City, Utah

Bradley's second year as a starter was cut short when he suffered a season-ending knee injury in the fifth game. He was off to a strong start, registering 26 tackles and three sacks.



## 40 LANCE BRANDENBURGH

Linebacker

6-1/230

Jr./Two Letters

Overland Park, Kan.

Brandenburgh served as the No. 2 WILL linebacker for much of the season but started the bowl game when Bo Ruud was sidelined. Brandenburgh responded with a career-best six tackles.



rushed past the quarterback. It was really to contain the run," Bradley said.

Even though he wore a green jersey — "the coaches called us 'green weenies,'" — and was held out of contact, he stayed involved at practice this spring. He and Bo Ruud, who also wore green, were "usually trying to coach up our guys," he said. By doing that, he learned the "nuances" of the defense.

"Last year, I felt like we just all had our assignments and we did them. But now I feel like I understand more than just what I'm doing or what the Mike's doing or the Will. You understand what everyone around you is doing and you operate more smoothly," he said.

Having to watch can be frustrating. But you do what you can because it is what it is. ■

## 58 DONTRELL MOORE

Linebacker

6-2/235

Sr./One Letter

Thibodaux, La.

Moore has spent time at middle linebacker, outside linebacker and defensive end in the nickel package. The junior college transfer played in all 12 games and finished with three tackles.



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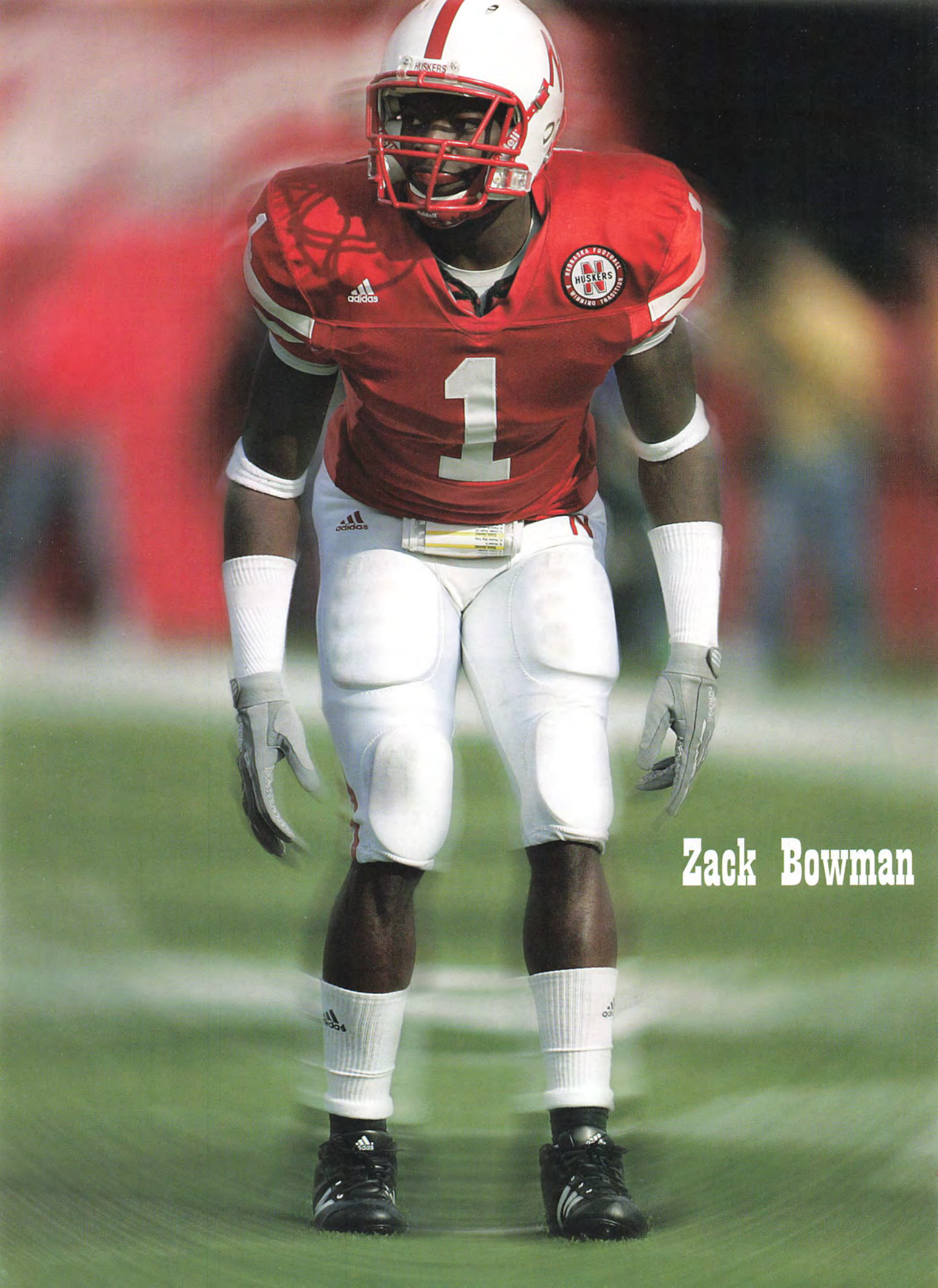
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**Zack Bowman**



# Pressure Subsides

**Y**ou might remember this story. Zack Bowman didn't ask for a No. 1 jersey. He didn't particularly want the number, comparing it to a basketball player wearing No. 23. It draws too much attention, which, in turn, translates into additional pressure. And he already was dealing with enough pressure as a five-star recruit.

The choice wasn't his, however. He was assigned No. 1 — or given it, depending on the point of view. So, not one to complain, Bowman wore the number and dealt with the pressure.

The pressure has subsided for the senior cornerback. He's a veteran, a returning starter. But he won't be wearing No. 1 this season. He'll be wearing No. 14. "I figure why not," he said.

He wore No. 14 in high school as well as at junior college, and he would have asked for it when he came to Nebraska, except that it wasn't available; Daniel Bullocks already had it.

Duplicate numbers are allowed (wide receiver Matt Schroeder also wore No. 14), but preferably not on the same side of the ball. So Bowman waited until Bullocks finished, then went to defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove and asked if he could switch numbers. That set the change in motion.

Responsibility comes with the number. Bullocks, a three-year starter, was a co-captain and second-team all-conference honoree last season, and "I'm going to carry on that tradition," said Bowman, the first corner to wear No. 14 since Barron Miles, first-team All-Big Eight in 1993 and 1994. (Dion Booker, who wore No. 14 before Bullocks, played both corner and safety in 1998, before settling in at the latter.)

Bowman became a "dominant player" by the end of last season, according to Cosgrove. He began as the nickel back then replaced Tierre Green as the regular starter in the eighth game against Oklahoma. The low point was probably the next week, his second start at Kansas — but he wasn't alone in that.

He finally began to feel comfortable in his third start against Kansas State, a result of "trusting my teammates and them trusting me to be in the right spot at the right time," he said.

Such trust wasn't misplaced. Bowman was in the right place at the right time twice in critical situations during the second half of the Alamo Bowl game, intercepting a pass in the end zone and then breaking up a pass at his own 2-yard line on fourth down with 2:34 remaining. He

## At A Glance

### Returning

Zack Bowman	6-2, 195	Sr.
Cortney Grixby	5-9, 170	Jr.
Titus Brothers	5-11, 190	Jr.
Chris LeFlore	5-10, 205	Jr.
Ryan Ford	5-11, 170	Fr.
Travis Gingery	5-10, 190	Jr.
Matt O'Hanlon	5-11, 200	So.

### Incoming

Andre Jones	6-0, 192	Jr.
Ricky Thenarse	6-0, 185	Fr.
Anthony West	6-0, 195	Fr.
Corey Young	6-0, 190	Fr.

### Outlook

Proven quality over quantity will describe the cornerbacks when Nebraska opens the season against Louisiana Tech, which will test them right away with its multiple-receiver, spread-the-field offense.

With Tierre Green moving to safety in the spring, the experience is tied up in Grixby and Bowman. Grixby has the majority of the experience. He's been in the mix since stepping on campus. As a true freshman, he was the No. 1 nickel back and started twice. Last season he settled in on the strong side, starting every game and earning all-conference honorable mention from the league coaches for his contributions to a unit that ranked second in the conference and 10th in the nation in pass efficiency defense. He was sixth on the team (first among corners) in tackles and tied for second in pass break-ups (Bowman had 11). Opposing teams are no longer prone to picking on him because of his size.

Grixby and Bowman combined for three of Nebraska's 13 interceptions, an area in which the Cornhuskers must improve across the board if they are to create more total turnovers. In 2003, they intercepted a school-record 32 passes, then managed fewer than half that many in 2004 (14). The trend must be reversed. Brothers, who helped save the Alamo Bowl victory by not giving up on the final play, has been at both cornerback and safety, as have others, including Bryan Wilson and Ben Eisenhart. But Brothers is the only one who has played, however limited his role.

Defensive back was an area of recruiting emphasis. On letter-of-intent-signing day, coach Bill Callahan indicated that all of the newcomers would learn cornerback first but that some would likely figure in right away at safety, an area with virtually no experience. Callahan compared Jones to Bowman last season. The transfer from Fresno City College is a physical player who "could help in the corner rotation and also help in the sub-packages. That's easily a position he'll jump into."

Callahan pulled the scholarship of Major Culbert, one of the 2006 letter-of-intent signees, pending resolution of legal problems related to an alleged off-the-field incident.



## 2 CORTNEY GRIXBY

Cornerback

5-9/170

Jr./Two Letters

Omaha, Neb.

As a sophomore, Grixby started all 12 games at strong cornerback and tied for second on the team with 10 pass breakups and had 46 tackles. He also was the Huskers' top punt returner.



## 14 ZACK BOWMAN

Cornerback

6-2/195

Sr./One Letter

Anchorage, Alaska

Bowman earned immediate playing time as a nickel back, then earned a Blackshirt and moved into the starting lineup for the final five games. He led the team with 11 pass breakups.



## 21 TITUS BROTHERS

Cornerback

5-11/190

Jr./One Letter

San Antonio, Texas

Brothers has the versatility to play cornerback and safety. He played in 10 games last season, including the Alamo Bowl, when he teamed with Zack Bowman to make the tackle on the game's final play.



## 35 CHRIS LEFLORE

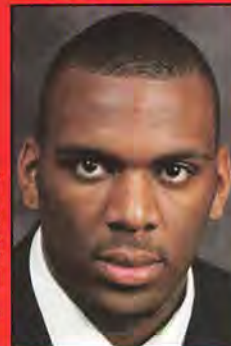
Cornerback

5-10/205

Jr./No Letters

Omaha, Neb.

LeFlore, the younger brother of former NU wide receiver Mark LeFlore, played in one game last season. He was credited with eight tackles in the Spring Game, playing for the No. 2 defense.



also didn't let up on the game's final play, joining Titus Brothers to stop Michigan tight end Tyler Ecker as time elapsed. Afterward, Bowman described his effort as "one of those just-in-case things."

Bowman was "much more comfortable" in the spring, not only because of his experience but also because he had continued to work during the off-season, studying video on his own at home as well as watching it three times a week with cornerbacks coach Phil Elmassian.

Watching himself wasn't always easy. But it had to be done. "It was kind of embarrassing because once you realize what you did, it's like, 'Oh, man.' Then you try to go to the next play, and you're like, 'I don't want to watch anymore.' You feel stupid. 'Why did I do that?'" Bowman said.

Studying video is difficult, anyway. It's a learned behavior, something that has to be done to improve. He likes to watch television, and not just ESPN. He'll watch anything from cooking to cartoons, which means he has to be disciplined enough to put in the DVD with the play cut-ups.

"I want to get better. I set goals for myself," said



Cortney Grixby and Zack Bowman celebrate after Bowman's interception against Baylor.

Bowman. "It's, 'How much better do you want to be?' I want to do this. I want to do that. I want to be All-Big 12. I want to be a leader on the field." He'll have to be that. Cortney Grixby is the only other cornerback with significant experience.

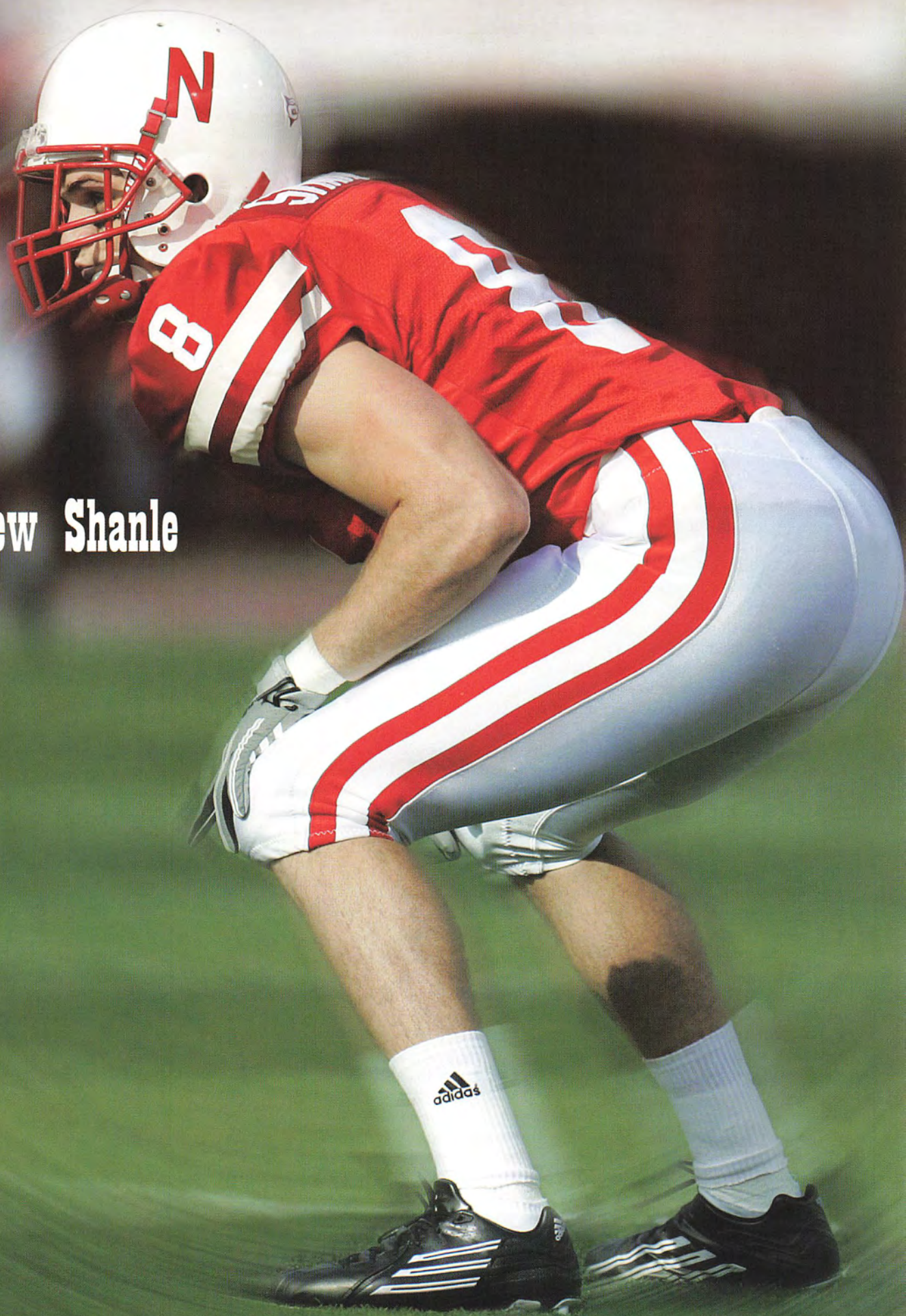
Bowman was heavier in the spring, about 5 pounds heavier than the 195 at which he played last season. Nutritionist James Harris suggested he get back to 195, but he prefers 200. He can still maneuver. He hasn't lost speed. And he's stronger. "I can tell," he said, flexing his right biceps.

Most seniors will tell you their time at Nebraska has passed quickly. And it really has for junior college transfers such as Bowman, who arrived in May of 2005 to begin preparing. "It's gone by fast," he said near the end of spring practice. "I just want to enjoy the moment with my teammates. We're a family, man. We come out here everyday and pump each other up to get better."

He still wore a No. 1 jersey during the spring. No one, on either side of the ball, wore No. 14. But that will change in training camp. "I'm excited for it," Bowman said. ■



**Andrew Shanle**





# All Too Quickly

**S**pring practice wasn't drudgery for Andrew Shanle, quite the contrary. He appreciated every drill, every opportunity to be on the field with his teammates. He didn't mind juggling football and classes. And he was thankful for remaining healthy, something that hasn't always been the case.

As a senior-to-be, he realized his career was going by all too quickly. Others had shared that realization with him, including his brother Scott, who played linebacker at Nebraska (2000-02). But it didn't sink in until he saw his friends going through their senior seasons, and then . . .

"You see the guys starting to apply for jobs," Shanle said. "You can think about it as a sophomore or junior, that it goes by fast. But it doesn't always hit you until you're a senior."

Some of his best buddies on the team were seniors a year ago, Adam Ickes, Blake Tiedtke and Tyler Fisher among them. And they regularly reminded him to enjoy his remaining time at Nebraska.

Others suggested that he pick easy classes for the fall semester, just to be eligible so he could concentrate on football. Shanle, a two-time, first-team academic all-conference honoree, received a degree in family and consumer sciences in May and will be playing as a graduate student.

If he had delayed graduation until December, he could have taken three undergraduate credit-hours and been eligible. By graduating, he will have to take nine credit hours, which is fine by him. He will concentrate on football, but not at the expense of continuing his education. He is beginning work toward a master's degree in educational administration during the summer and plans to continue through the spring semester. "Being on scholarship, I want to get as much graduate school paid for as I can," he said. He also wants to continue in athletics as a coach, "see where that can get me, see what I can do with it."

Shanle has done a lot with his athletic ability, following his brother to Nebraska from tiny St. Edward, Neb., where he was an all-state eight-man player, a safety on defense and a quarterback on offense. He earned a letter as a red-shirted freshman, playing primarily on special teams, then established himself as a sophomore, backing up Josh Bullocks at free safety and continuing his special-teams play.

The Missouri game in 2004 was kind of a coming-out party for him and Ickes. Early in the second quarter, he blocked a punt. Ickes scooped up the ball and returned it 16 yards for a touchdown and a 10-3 Cornhusker lead. Then, in the third quarter, Ickes forced a fumble, which Shanle recovered deep in Missouri territory to set up the touchdown that increased the lead to 17-3.

The week before at Kansas State, with Bullocks ham-

## At A Glance

### Returning

Tierre Green	6-1, 200	Jr.
Andrew Shanle	6-1, 210	Sr.
Ben Eisenhart	5-11, 200	Jr.
Brandon Rigoni	5-6, 185	Sr.
Bryan Wilson	6-1, 200	Jr.
Dan Erickson	6-1, 195	Jr.
Jordan Adams	6-2, 200	Jr.

### Outlook

Despite an understandably positive post-spring assessment, safety remains a significant concern, with virtually no experience to replace Daniel Bullocks (strong) and Blake Tiedtke (free).

Bullocks had 32 consecutive starts and finished with 226 career tackles, the second-most ever by a Cornhusker defensive back. He also was credited with 22 pass break-ups, a school career record for a safety, and intercepted eight passes. He was third on the team in tackles (83) and tied for second in pass break-ups (10) last season, earning second-team all-conference recognition.

Tiedtke, the coaches' choice as the most improved defensive player in the spring of 2005, was an unexpected replacement for Josh Bullocks, earning the job in competition with Shanle. Tiedtke, a former walk-on, had been a cornerback. He was fourth on the team in tackles with 68, including six for losses and four sacks. He broke up six passes, had one interception and caused two fumbles.

Green hasn't developed a position-identity crisis despite a second switch in three seasons. After playing I-back as a redshirted freshman, he moved to cornerback last season, starting the first seven games before giving way to Zack Bowman. Then he moved to strong safety in the spring. That change wasn't as dramatic as it might seem, however. Green was an all-state safety at Omaha Benson High School and didn't play much on offense until his senior season. So safety "kind of comes natural," he said.

Eisenhart worked at cornerback last season but is more comfortable at strong safety and settled in there during the spring, playing well in the Red-White game. Rigoni has made a name on special teams and is looking for playing time at safety. Wilson has worked at both cornerback and safety as has Titus Brothers. Erickson was listed as a safety and wide receiver in the spring. And one or more of the Cornhuskers' scholarship-recruit defensive backs could end up playing at safety.

pered by a shoulder injury, Shanle came off the bench to play most of the game. He was credited with seven tackles and a sack.

When Bullocks decided to forgo his final season in favor of the NFL draft, Shanle appeared to have the inside track on replacing him. The Cornhusker media guide even



## 30 TIERRE GREEN

**Strong Safety**

**6-1/200**

**Jr./Two Letters**

**Omaha, Neb.**

The versatile Green, who will make his second position switch in as many years, had 29 tackles, and four breakups as a cornerback last year. He also averaged 24.8 yards on nine kickoff returns.



## 8 ANDREW SHANLE

**Free Safety**

**6-1/210**

**Sr./Three Letters**

**St. Edward, Neb.**

Shanle appeared in all 12 games as a backup at both safety positions, finishing with 10 tackles and a pass breakup. The veteran of 35 career games was also a key contributor on special teams.



## 46 BEN EISENHART

**Strong Safety**

**5-11/200**

**Jr./One Letter**

**Culbertson, Neb.**

Eisenhart worked at cornerback a year ago, before settling in at strong safety in the spring. He played well in the Red-White Spring Game, finishing with nine tackles for the White squad.



## 28 BRYAN WILSON

**Free Safety**

**6-1/200**

**Jr./No Letters**

**Granada Hills, Calif.**

Wilson, a junior college transfer who came to NU with three seasons of eligibility, appeared in one game as a backup cornerback. He worked at both cornerback and safety in the spring.



described him as the "leading candidate" to replace Bullocks, based on his off-season conditioning and play in the spring.

But Tiedtke emerged from obscurity to earn the job — yes, obscurity. Tiedtke, a walk-on, had played in eight games, total, during his Cornhusker career, and in only two the previous season.

Though less than full-speed to begin spring practice in 2005 because of injuries related to post-winter conditioning tests, "it's no excuse," Shanle said. He was adamant about that. He and Tiedtke, who would earn a scholarship, finished the spring "very close" in the competition to replace Bullocks. Tiedtke played particularly well in the Spring Game, however, and earned the award as the spring's most improved defensive player. He "had the big plays, and it just fell his way," said Shanle.

Even so, he still had preseason practice to establish himself as the starter, or at least that's what he thought. As it turned out, the coaches had different plans. They told him he would be working at both safety positions backing up Tiedtke and Daniel Bullocks. "We talked about having a three-safety rotation," Shanle said. "I kind of liked the idea of backing up both."

The three-safety system lasted through the opener against Maine, then stopped. After that, his opportunities came mostly on special teams. "It was hard. I feel like I let quite a few people down," he said. But he wasn't discouraged. He made the most of his back-up's role. Being able to learn the two positions was a blessing. And he was only a junior, so he would have another season.

That season is at-hand. Much has changed since he red-shirted in 2002. Bill Busch is his fourth position coach. George Darlington coached defensive backs when he arrived. Marvin Sanders coached them his second year,

## 24 BRANDON RIGONI

**Free Safety**

**5-6/185**

**Sr./Two Letters**

**Lincoln, Neb.**

Rigoni, one of the biggest hitters on coverage units, will look to earn playing time at safety. He played in all 12 games and finished his junior season with 15 tackles and forced two fumbles.



and Phil Elmassian his third. Elmassian focuses on cornerbacks now.

The constant changes have been challenging. "Once you feel like you're comfortable, something changes," said Shanle. "But I feel confident. I like the idea that some of the other safeties will feel comfortable asking me questions. That just makes me feel good."

In addition to explaining defenses, he's likely to offer advice to younger players, regardless of whether they're in the secondary, or on defense for that matter. Make the most of this, he'll tell them. He started to understand last season that the end of his career was fast approaching.

"I did as much as I could, talking to them (seniors) and getting their feelings so it wouldn't be a shocker, so I could kind of do the things they wished they would have done," Shanle said. "It's scary that it will be the last time. But I've done everything I could to be ready and prepared."

"I've learned from the best, so I'm ready to come out." ■





**Brandon Rigoni**



# He Couldn't Let Up

**W**hen Brandon Rigoni walked on in the fall of 2002, he was assigned a locker in Schulte Fieldhouse. At the time, every Cornhusker freshman, scholarship or walk-on, was sent there.

The north locker room wasn't state-of-the-art and definitely wasn't shown to prospective recruits during on-campus visits. Recruiting tours passed through the varsity locker room on the lower level of the South Stadium. No one bothered to mention the dingy freshman locker room at the other end.

"Oh, by the way, you'll be changing down there for now."

On game days, those who got to suit up had to walk across the field beforehand, carrying their pads, as fans filed into the stadium. Afterward, they had to walk back as the stadium emptied.

Typically, scholarship freshmen didn't spend much time at the north end. A few were there only briefly. Some moved out after preseason practice. Most were out before spring, when at least some of the freshman walk-ons got to move their stuff to the south end, too.

Rigoni didn't leave the north end until the spring — of 2004, his second year. Everyone moved then. The freshman locker room wasn't used after coach Bill Callahan arrived. That was "a pretty big change from when I first got here," said Rigoni. The team no longer needed two locker rooms.

The numbers were larger pre-Callahan, and "we were sometimes three or four deep at every position on the scout team," Rigoni said. "A lot of times, the coaches didn't know who you were. It's not like that anymore. With all of us together in the locker room, everybody knows each other."

Despite its limitations, the cramped quarters and the cold floor, the north locker room had its advantages. "Since they didn't really care what we were doing, we got away with everything. We had a lot of fun down there, but we were detached from the nucleus of the team," said Rigoni. "A lot of the older guys didn't know us, and we didn't know them. A lot of guys were lost in the mix."

In addition to being a walk-on, Rigoni stood 5-foot-6. So he might have gotten lost if not for his determination and unrestrained enthusiasm. He refused to be ignored, scout team or not.

Nebraska's offense was option-oriented when he arrived, of course, and as a scout-team safety, he dealt constantly with crack-back blocks during practice. "I just

## AT A GLANCE

### Returning

Jordan Congdon (PK)	5-11, 175	So.
Lane Kelly (LS)	6-4, 270	Sr.
Dan Titchener (P)	6-0, 195	So.
Jake Wesch (P/PK)	6-1, 200	So.
Tyler Kester (P)	6-1, 200	Jr.
Jordan Alegria (PK)	6-1, 210	RFr.
Bryan Benzel (LS)	6-2, 255	RFr.
Nathan McBride (LS)	6-1, 205	RFr.
T.J. O'Leary (LS)	6-1, 250	So.

### Outlook

Special teams received special emphasis following Bill Callahan's first season as coach and they have continued to be a point of emphasis because they are "an area where you can improve your team the quickest," Callahan said. "It all correlates to field position."

They also are "where the roles of your players are determined," he said. Young players can be evaluated in covering kicks and making tackles in the open field. "You find the guys who 'want to' in that area of football. They have a desire and a passion to play. Those are the guys you want."

Congdon earned freshman All-America honors, making 31 consecutive extra-point kicks after missing his first and hitting 19-of-23 field goal attempts, the best percentage (.826) in the conference.

Though punt- and kickoff-return jobs were opened to competition in the spring — no decisions were made — starters for both return. Nebraska ranked second in the Big 12 in punt returns, with Terrence Nunn and Cortney Grixby sharing the load, but only sixth in kickoff returns (Marlon Lucky). The kickoff-return unit "didn't produce the rankings that I'd wished and hoped it would," said Callahan.

Punting is a significant concern in the wake of Sam Koch's departure. The Cornhuskers ranked first in the conference and second in the nation in punting, with Koch averaging a school-record 46.5 yards per punt. Titchener emerged from spring practice atop the depth chart, but competition will continue during training camp, with Henery, a preferred walk-on, also having an opportunity to earn the job.

Nebraska spent a lot of time on special teams during the spring, and "I see our special teams starting to get better," Callahan said. "Special teams can win you a lot of games."

basically could tee off on receivers all day long, and that's all I'd do, try to knock them out, make somebody notice me," he said.

"At first, it was sort of upsetting to them (receivers).



## 29 JORDAN CONGDON

Place-Kicker

5-11/175

So./One Letter

San Diego, Calif.

Congdon quickly established himself as one of the top kickers in the nation. He set an NU season record for field goals with 19 (in 23 attempts) and made 31 straight PATs after missing his first.



## 97 DAN TITCHENER

Punter

6-0/195

So./No Letters

Cheyenne, Wyo.

Titchener emerged from spring practice atop the depth chart, but competition to replace NFL draft pick Sam Koch will continue in the fall. Titchener averaged 44.5 yards per punt in the Spring Game.



## 92 LANE KELLY

Long Snapper

6-4/270

Sr./Three Letters

Omaha, Neb.

Kelly has become a fixture as the starting long snapper for punting and place-kicking attempts for the past three years. He has been the snapping specialist since his true freshman season in 2003.



## 98 JAKE WESCH

Punter/Place-Kicker

6-1/200

So./One Letter

North Bend, Neb.

Wesch played in nine games as a redshirt freshman, sharing kick-off duties with true freshman place-kicker Jordan Congdon. Wesch averaged 38.0 yards on three punts in the Spring Game.



But rather quickly, I think, it sort of became respect. It became kind of a joke among them. Sometimes they didn't want to come crack me because other guys, I think, would let them make the block, not really take it to them."

Back then, established players occasionally would suggest to those on the scout team that they let up, that they didn't need to go full-speed. "Come on, take it easy," they would say.

Rigoni wouldn't listen, however. "I couldn't let up," he said. "That wasn't going to get me anywhere. I was on the scout team. I was the one who needed to be working."

Such situations are less likely to occur now, according to Rigoni. "That was more when there were millions of guys on the team, and we didn't know each other as well," he said. "With the smaller numbers, there's more accountability. You would never hear anybody say something like that now. They'd lose a lot of respect. The team is so tight, that would get around if somebody was saying to lay off."

Rigoni expected to begin contributing on special teams when he was a sophomore, after becoming familiar with defensive coordinator Bo Pelini and secondary coach Marvin Sanders. When they were fired after the 2003 season, he was "a little disappointed," he said.

In addition, there was talk of Callahan's cutting walk-ons, and he was "a little bit nervous" about that. But by the end of spring practice, he was confident he wouldn't be cut.

Callahan and his staff are "big-time personnel guys. They're getting recruits from all over the place, and there

was some concern that guys from around the state who would normally have walked on wouldn't be able to," Rigoni said. "But if you want to play here bad enough, you can do it."

He is proof of that. His scout-team efforts paid off in an opportunity to contribute on special teams. In many ways, he is the definitive special-teams player. He has been on the punt and punt return teams, the kickoff team and the field goal block team. And he expects to be on them again.

Plus, he'd like to see action at free safety. He finished second on the depth chart behind senior Andrew Shanle during the spring. "We have some good players coming in, so I'm going to have to defend that spot in the fall," said Rigoni. "But I feel like they're comfortable with me out there."

He also would like to earn a scholarship, but "it's not something I dwell on," he said.

Rigoni, a two-time, first-team academic all-conference honoree who will finish a degree in December, has accomplished a lot since the fall of 2002. He has changed and has seen dramatic changes around him. Schulte Fieldhouse is gone, replaced by the Tom and Nancy Osborne Complex.

Many of those with whom he locker-d at the north end have long since left, for various reasons. He and the other seniors talk about that from time to time. "Everybody knows the big names, but there were a lot of names that people didn't know about from that north locker room," he said. "Guys got in the groove of not really feeling a part of the team. You ended up with much more turnover, probably." ■



# 2006 ROSTER

Source: Huskers.com

Eligibility, status to be determined for some freshmen and first-year players; \* — indicates letters earned

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown (school)							
7	Adams, Jordan	S	6-3	200	Jr.	Santee, Calif.	55	McBride, Nathan	LS	6-1	205	RFr.	Scottsdale, Ariz. (Chaparral)
						(Grossmont, Calif., College)	13	*McKeon, Corey	LB	6-1	225	Jr.	Naperville, Ill. (North)
93	Alegria, Jordan	PK	6-1	210	RFr.	North Platte, Neb.		McNeill, Mike	TE	6-4	215	Fr.	Kirkwood, Mo.
	Allen, Pierre	DE	6-5	222	Fr.	Denver, Colo. (Jefferson)	33	*Miller, Grant	FB	6-0	225	Sr.	Peabody, Mass. (Veterans)
	Allen, Steve	LB	6-2	230	Jr.	Delray Beach, Fla. (Atlantic/ Fresno City, Calif.), CC)	58	*Moore, Dontrell	LB	6-2	230	Sr.	Thibodaux, La. (Coffeyville, Kan., CC)
65	***Austin, Greg	OL	6-1	290	Sr.	Cypress, Texas (Cypress-Fairbanks)	44	**Moore, Jay	DE	6-4	280	Sr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
	Barrett, Cruz	OL	6-4	315	Fr.	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland)		Moore, Kyle	LB	6-1	208	Fr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
3	*Beck, Harrison	QB	6-2	210	So.	Clearwater, Fla. (Countyside)	81	**Mueller, Josh	TE	6-5	265	Jr.	Columbus, Neb. (Lakeview)
52	Benzel, Bryan	LS	6-2	270	RFr.	Alliance, Neb.	76	*Murtha, Lydon	OL	6-7	315	So.	Hutchinson, Minn.
1	*Bowman, Zackary	CB	6-2	190	Sr.	Anchorage, Alaska (Bartlett/ N.M. Military Institute)		Nicks, Carl	OL	6-5	325	Jr.	Salinas, Calif. (North)/ Hartnell JC/New Mexico State
34	***Bradley, Stewart	LB	6-4	240	Sr.	Salt Lake City, Utah (Highland)	83	**Nunn, Terrence	WR	6-0	185	Jr.	Houston, Texas (Cypress Falls)
40	**Brandenburgh, Lance	LB	6-1	230	Jr.	Overland Park, Kan. (Aquinas)	33	O'Hanlon, Matt	SS	5-11	200	So.	Bellevue, Neb. (Bellevue East)
23	Brooks, Chris	WR	6-2	195	So.	St. Louis, Mo. (Hazelwood East)	82	O'Leary, T.J.	LS	6-2	260	So.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North/ New Mexico State)
21	*Brothers, Titus	SS	5-11	190	Jr.	San Antonio, Texas (Judson)	52	O'Shea, Mark	LB	5-11	225	Sr.	Dallas, Texas (Jesuit Prep)
59	Byford, Brett	OL	6-3	305	Jr.	Hartselle, Ala.	15	Octavien, Steve	LB	6-0	235	Jr.	Naples, Fla. (Lely/ William R. Harper, Ill., College)
82	Cammack, Wes	WR	5-11	180	RFr.	DeWitt, Neb. (Tri County)	45	Otto, Will	FB	5-11	240	Sr.	Fullerton, Calif. (Troy/ Fullerton College)
90	***Carriker, Adam	DE	6-6	295	Sr.	Kennewick, Wash. (Kennewick)	78	Pasteur, Brock	OL	6-6	290	Jr.	Orlando, Fla. (University/ Mesabi Range, Minn., CC)
62	Christensen, Andy	OL	6-3	300	So.	Bennington, Neb.	54	*Patrick, Chris	OL	6-4	285	Jr.	Ithaca, Mich.
29	*Congdon, Jordan	PK	5-11	180	So.	San Diego, Calif. (St. Augustine)	17	*Peterson, Todd	WR	6-4	205	So.	Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)
45	Covey, Nick	LB	6-2	225	RFr.	Glendale, Ariz. (Mountain Ridge)	85	**Phillips, J.B.	TE	6-3	255	Jr.	Colleyville, Texas (Heritage)
94	*Cryer, Barry	DL	6-2	275	Sr.	Marrero, La. (John Ehret/ Dodge City, Kan., CC)	68	Picou, Jordan	OL	6-2	320	Jr.	Rialto, Calif. (Eisenhower/ Mt. San Antonio, Calif., CC)
54	*Dagunduro, Ola	DL	6-2	300	Sr.	Inglewood, Calif. (Compton, Calif., CC)	72	Picou, Rodney	OL	6-4	300	RFr.	Moreno Valley, Calif. (Canyon Springs)
15	Davis, Beau	QB	6-4	185	So.	Venice, Calif.	98	*Potter, Zach	DE	6-7	270	So.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)
38	*Dillard, Phillip	LB	6-2	250	So.	Tulsa, Okla. (Jenks)	86	Poulosky, Andy	DE	6-2	240	Jr.	Ponca, Neb.
46	*Eisenhart, Ben	SS	5-11	200	Jr.	Culbertson, Neb.		Purify, Maurice	WR	6-4	210	Jr.	Eureka, Calif./ City College of San Francisco
26	*Erickson, Dan	WR	6-0	195	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Papio-LaVista)	85	Rice, Thomas	DE	6-1	235	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. (East)
47	Farino, Paul	FB	6-0	240	RFr.	East Meadow, N.Y. (Kellenberg)	24	**Rigoni, Brandon	SS	5-6	180	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
28	***Fluellen, Isaiah	WR	6-0	185	Sr.	Ramstein, Germany (Ramstein American)	63	Roark, Craig	OL	6-2	300	RFr.	Ada, Okla.
27	Ford, Ryan	CB	5-11	170	Fr.	Winfield, Ala.	51	**Ruud, Bo	LB	6-3	230	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
57	Fredinburg, Conan	OL	6-7	310	RFr.	Sioux Falls, S.D. (Roosevelt)	48	Sand, Andy	TE	6-2	225	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
8	Ganz, Joe	QB	6-1	200	So.	Palos Heights, Ill. (Slagg)	42	Senske, Matt	FB	6-3	230	Jr.	Bellevue, Neb. (Bellevue East)
34	*Glenn, Cody	IB	6-0	230	So.	Rusk, Texas (Rusk)	8	***Shanley, Andrew	FS	6-1	205	So.	St. Edward, Neb.
30	**Green, Tierre	SS	6-1	200	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Benson)	88	*Sievers, Clayton	TE	6-4	240	So.	Elkhorn, Neb.
2	**Grixby, Courtney	CB	5-9	165	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)	70	*Slauson, Matt	OL	6-5	340	So.	Colorado Springs, Colo. (Air Force Prep)
	Haines, Victory	OL	6-7	285	Jr.	Logan, Utah (Snow, Utah, College)		Smith, Mike	DE	6-6	260	Fr.	Las Vegas, Nev. (Palo Verde)
7	*Hardy, Frantz	WR	6-0	175	Jr.	Miami, Fla. (Washington/ Butler County, Kan., CC)	88	Spain, Tyrell	WR	6-3	190	Jr.	San Diego, Calif. (Hoover/ Mesa, Ariz., College)
35	Harvey, David	TE	6-3	235	RFr.	La Plata, Md. (McDonough)	43	*Steinkuhler, Ty	DL	6-3	260	So.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
	Henery, Alex	P	6-3	190	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Burke)	77	Suh, Ndamukong	DL	6-4	300	So.	Portland, Ore. (Grant)
	Henry, Will	WR	6-5	195	Fr.	El Paso, Texas (J.M. Hanks)	84	Sullivan, Tony	DE	6-3	240	Jr.	Wahoo, Neb. (Neumann)
11	***Herian, Matt	TE	6-5	240	Sr.	Pierce, Neb.	87	*Swift, Nate	WR	6-2	195	So.	Hutchinson, Minn.
	Hickman, Jacob	OL	6-3	270	Fr.	Bakersfield, Calif. (Centennial)	13	*Taylor, Zac	QB	6-2	210	Sr.	Norman, Okla./ (Butler County, Kan., CC)
86	Hill, Sean	TE	6-3	255	Jr.	Lisle, Ill. (Naperville North)	89	Teafatiller, Hunter	TE	6-3	220	So.	Kingsburg, Calif. (San Joaquin)
	Holt, Menelik	WR	6-4	215	Fr.	San Diego (St. Augustine)		Thenarse, Ricky	DB	6-0	185	Fr.	Los Angeles, Calif. (Jordan)
61	Huff, Mike	OL	6-4	300	So.	Ralston, Neb.	97	Titchener, Dan	P	6-0	195	So.	Cheyenne, Wyo. (East)
32	*Jackson, Brandon	IB	5-11	205	Jr.	Horn Lake, Miss.	41	***Todd, Dane	FB	5-10	235	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
23	*Jackson, Leon	IB	6-2	210	So.	Pasco, Wash.	10	Tomerlin, Justin	DE	6-6	265	So.	San Clemente, Calif. (Butler County, Kan., CC)
	Jensen, Seth	DT	6-3	275	Fr.	Fort Morgan, Colo.	99	*Turner, Barry	DL	6-3	245	So.	Antioch, Tenn. (Brentwood Academy)
	Johnson, Brandon	DT	6-3	312	Jr.	Chicago, Ill. (Marshall/Compton, Calif., CC/Graceland Univ.)	59	Voges, Brian	LB	6-3	225	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest/ Phoenix JC)
	Jones, Andre	DB	6-0	192	Jr.	Fort Walton Beach, Fla. (Choctawatchee)/Fresno City, Calif., CC/Kentucky	98	*Wesch, Jake	PK	6-1	190	So.	North Bend, Neb.
	Jones, D.J.	OL	6-5	300	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)		West, Anthony	DB	6-0	195	Fr.	San Diego, Calif. (Point Loma)
47	*Kadavy, Andy	LB	5-11	225	Sr.	Seward, Neb.		Williams, Keith	OL	6-5	310	Fr.	Florissant, Mo. (McClure North)
92	***Kelly, Lane	LS	6-4	270	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)	28	Wilson, Bryan	CB	6-2	190	Jr.	Granada Hills, Calif. (Pierce, Calif., College)
19	Kester, Tyler	P	6-1	200	Jr.	Clearwater, Neb.		Wilson, Kenny	RB	6-0	220	Jr.	Liberal, Kan./ (Butler County, Kan., CC)
40	Koehler, Colton	FB	6-1	225	Fr.	Harvard, Neb.	53	Wortman, Tyler	LB	6-3	220	So.	Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)
36	*Lawson, Thomas	FB	6-0	225	So.	Parker, Colo. (Ponderosa)		Young, Corey	DB	6-0	190	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)
35	LeFlore, Chris	CB	5-10	210	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)		Young, Dreu	TE	6-5	210	Fr.	Cozad, Neb.
74	*Lingenfelter, Newton	OL	6-5	280	Sr.	Plainview, Neb.							
20	*Lucky, Marlon	IB	6-0	210	So.	North Hollywood, Calif.							
89	*Luhrs, Kevin	DE	6-1	255	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)							
	Makovicka, Justin	FB	6-1	225	Fr.	Brainard, Neb. (East Butler)							
50	***Mann, Kurt	OL	6-4	290	Sr.	Grand Island, Neb.							
	Martin, Ben	DE	6-4	265	Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)							



# 'Michael Heisman'

No one questioned Mike Rozier's toughness. He was "very, very tough," Turner Gill once said, "mentally and physically tough. He was going to push it to the edge."

That was never more apparent than in the Missouri game his junior season.

Rozier wasn't expected to play because of a painful hip pointer. But with Roger Craig hampered by an ankle injury and Jeff Smith largely ineffective, he got the call in the second quarter. He wore a flak jacket to protect the hip. But he discarded it at halftime because it was too bulky.

With Gill sidelined by a mild concussion suffered late in the first half, the Cornhuskers' trailed upset-minded Missouri going into the fourth quarter, 10-9, a deficit that would increase by a field goal before they rallied behind Gill's replacement, Bruce Mathison, and Rozier.

Nebraska took a lead it wouldn't relinquish with 4:45 remaining on a 79-yard touchdown drive. Rozier gained 66 of the yards, rushing for 52 and catching two passes for 14.

After Mathison sealed the 23-19 victory (Missouri would score with less than a minute remaining) with a 16-yard touchdown run, set up by linebacker Brent Evans' interception a little over 3 minutes later, Rozier made his way to the training room, an ice pack on his hip.

He wouldn't return to the locker room to meet with reporters for a half hour.

Talking to reporters was never high on his to-do list, though not necessarily because he disliked reporters but rather because he disliked talking about himself.

What Rozier liked was running with a football, something he did better than any Cornhusker before or since has. In three seasons, he rushed for 4,780 yards, including a school single-season record 2,148 as a senior. He was a two-time All-American and the Heisman Trophy winner in 1983.

Such accomplishments have earned him a place in the College Football Hall of Fame, one of 13 NCAA Division I-A players to be inducted on Dec. 5 in New York City, followed by enshrinement in South Bend, Ind., the following summer. He'll be the 13th Cornhusker enshrined.

Six Nebraska coaches also are enshrined, most recently Tom Osborne in 1998. Johnny Rodgers, the 1972 Heisman Trophy winner, was the most recent Cornhusker player enshrined.

"Mike was one of the greatest running backs I've seen," said Osborne. "He had great ability to make people miss while continuing up field, without much deviation in his path."

However, Rozier deviated a good deal on one of his most memorable runs during a 42-10 victory against UCLA in 1983.

On second-and-goal from the Bruins' 2-yard line, he took a pitch from Gill, headed left toward Memorial Stadium's east sideline, then reversed his field, giving ground back to the 18-yard line. By the time he reached the end zone, he had run an estimated 75 to 80 yards.

Afterward, teammate Irving Fryar referred to him as "Michael Heisman."

The run was part of Rozier's Heisman resume. The UCLA game was televised nationally by ESPN, and CBS cut into a telecast of the Iowa-Ohio State game to show a replay.

Rozier also didn't take the most direct path to Nebraska from Woodrow Wilson High School in Camden, N.J. He fell just short of the NCAA's freshman eligibility requirement, in part because of a teachers' strike, which delayed the start of the school year when he was a senior.

So he played one season at Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College, in a wishbone offense. He arrived in Lincoln in the late summer of 1981, at 2 a.m., after a 34-hour bus ride from Camden.

As a junior, Rozier broke Bobby Reynolds' single-season rushing record, surpassing it with a 251-yard effort against Oklahoma State, two weeks after the Missouri game. His 1,689 yards that season now rank fourth on Nebraska's all-time list. But yards and touchdowns alone don't tell his story.

"He was a great teammate, a great football player," Dave

## HUSKERS IN THE COLLEGE HALL OF FAME



Mike Rozier

### Players

Name (years)	Inducted
Ed Weir, tackle (1923-25)	1951
George Sauer, fullback (1931-33)	1954
Guy Chamberlin, end (1913-15)	1962
Clarence Swanson, end (1918-21)	1973
Sam Francis, fullback (1934-36)	1977
Bobby Reynolds, halfback (1950-52)	1984
Forrest Behm, tackle (1938-40)	1988
Wayne Meylan, middle guard (1965-67)	1991
Bob Brown, guard (1961-63)	1993
Rich Glover, middle guard (1970-72)	1995
Dave Rimington, center (1979-82)	1997
Johnny Rodgers, wingback (1970-72)	2000
Mike Rozier, I-back (1981-83)	2006

### Coaches

Fielding Yost (1898)	1951
Dana X. Bible (1929-36)	1951
Lawrence "Biff" Jones (1937-41)	1954
E.N. Robinson (1896-97)	1955
Bob Devaney (1962-72)	1981
Tom Osborne (1973-97)	1998

Rimington said not long ago.

Rimington, another Cornhusker in the Hall of Fame, recalled the final regular-season game in 1982 at Hawaii. Nebraska trailed 16-7 going into the fourth quarter, and Rozier was on the sideline, injured. Even so, "he was out giving us water," said Rimington. "I was amazed. 'Mike, you're the star of the team. You don't have to give us water. Sit down and relax. We'll take care of this.'"

The Cornhuskers did, scoring 30 points in the fourth quarter.

"Mike was a guy you just couldn't help but like," Rimington said. "He was always a happy guy. His enthusiasm for the game was pretty infectious for everybody. He was a great player. He just played football and had fun doing it. And everybody else kind of caught on to the whole thing."

Others shared Rimington's opinion. "Mike was a team player," said Gill. "He had tremendous talent and could do things on his own. But he was always a team guy."

Rozier lives with wife Rochelle and 3-year-old son Michael in Sicklerville, N.J. His other children, JaMichael and Amer, live in Houston. ■



# Quick Hits

## SAME ROUND, SAME NUMBER

What are the odds? A year ago, former Cornhusker safety Josh Bullocks was selected in the second round of the NFL Draft. He was the 40th player taken. This year, twin brother Daniel Bullocks, also a safety, was selected in the second round of the draft. He also was the 40th player taken.

The Detroit Lions selected Daniel, the first of four Cornhuskers drafted and the only one on the first day. Punter Sam Koch and defensive tackles Le Kevin Smith and Titus Adams were taken on the second day, by the Baltimore Ravens, New England Patriots and New York Jets, respectively.

Koch, who went in the sixth round, was the first punter selected.

Daniel Bullocks was a three-year starter at strong safety, following Josh as a co-captain in 2005 after Josh opted to leave Nebraska after his junior season. Daniel was credited with 83 tackles and 10 pass break-ups. He ran the fastest 40-yard dash time at the NFL Combine, 4.39 seconds.

Like Koch, Smith was selected in the sixth round. Smith was taken in the seventh.

For the second year in a row, no Cornhusker offensive players were drafted. Center Josh Sewell (sixth round) and quarterback Jammal Lord (sixth) were the last offensive players to be drafted, in 2004, and Houston drafted Lord as a safety. I-back Cory Ross and offensive tackle Seppo Ewvaraye signed as free agents this year, Ross with the Ravens, Ewvaraye with the Carolina Panthers.

Only two other Cornhuskers besides Josh Bullocks were drafted a year ago, cornerback Fabian Washington (first) and linebacker Barrett Ruud (second).

Another member of Nebraska's scholarship recruiting class that included the Bullocks twins, Ruud, Smith, Adams, Ross and Ewvaraye also was selected in this year's draft. Danieal Manning, a safety from Abilene Christian, was the Chicago Bears' first pick, the 42nd player overall. Manning signed a letter of intent with the Cornhuskers but didn't qualify academically.

## 'SLAUSBURGER'

When Bill Callahan or Jay Norvell calls for "Burger," sophomore offensive tackle Matt Slauson responds. "Burger" is short for "Slausburger," one of Slauson's nicknames. Others include "Pain Train," "Moses" and "Slausonator," which is probably the oldest.

The way Slauson remembers, he was given the nickname "Slausonator" as a wrestler in junior high. His high school basketball coach in Oregon, who also coached the offensive line for the football team, began calling him "Pain Train." And the "Moses" nickname originated during the basketball season his senior year "because when I'd go up for a rebound, guys would just fall off of me," he said.

"It would be like parting the Red Sea, I guess."

As for a favorite, "I really don't care," said Slauson. "I get a kick out of all of them, especially 'Slausburger' because I don't know where that comes from at all."

Actually, he knows where the nickname started — former graduate assistant Angus McClure was the first to call him "Slausburger." He doesn't know why, but it stuck.

## CLOSE CALL

Sophomore running back Cody Glenn had a harrowing experience on his way home to Rusk, Texas, following the university's spring semester. Glenn was driving on Interstate 35 near Purcell, Okla., when he apparently dozed off at the wheel of his 2001 Nissan Sentra. The Sentra went under a semi, swerved across the median into oncoming traffic and then back into the median.

"The first thing that came to mind is that I was going to die," Glenn told the Lincoln Journal Star. "It was real scary, but thank God I was OK." All's well that ends well.

## WELCOME BACK LEON

On April 24, coach Bill Callahan issued a statement regarding sophomore running back Leon Jackson, who had decided to leave Nebraska. "We want to thank Leon for his contributions and efforts and we wish him well in his future endeavors. We have been

extremely supportive of Leon Jackson's development in our football program and we are disappointed to see him leave so early in his career."

On May 2, Callahan issued another statement regarding Jackson, who had been re-instated. "We are giving Leon another opportunity to flourish as a student-athlete. One of the reasons I chose to come back to college football was the opportunity to help young men like Leon realize their full potential on and off the field . . . we look forward to helping him reach his goals."

Jackson's first season at Nebraska was filled with frustration. He missed two days of preseason practice while waiting academic clearance from the NCAA then found himself at safety after a brief time at running back. Initially, it appeared he might redshirt, but he played on special teams and finished the season at wide receiver on the scout team before returning to running back in the spring.

He carried 12 times for 52 yards in the Spring Game, seeing action for both teams.

Callahan had granted him a release from his scholarship contingent on not transferring to an NCAA Division I-A program.

## 'BUG GUY'

When preseason practice began last August, junior wide receiver Tyrell Spain expected to be involved. All he had to do was get academic clearance from the NCAA so he could transfer from Mesa College in San Diego. The clearance never came, however, because credits from an on-line summer class didn't transfer. So he had a choice: he could go home to San Diego and look for another school. Or he could remove the deficiency and enroll at Nebraska mid-year.



Tyrell Spain

He chose the latter, taking a class at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. The Cornhusker coaches "were going to stick with me and so, as a man, I put my word behind them, that I'm going to stick with them, become a Cornhusker," Spain said one day in the spring.

Having to sit out "humbled me. It just made me realize that I loved the game and this is where I want to play," said Spain, who could attend games but not practice. "I love it here."

He took an art class at Southeast Community College, but "I'm not really an artsy guy," he said. "I think I'm a bug guy." He took an insect biology class during the spring semester, and "I'm into that right now. It's neat. You find out some of the weirdest things messing with bugs."

## BRIEFLY

● Nebraska will play Virginia Tech in 2008 and 2009. The Hokies will come to Memorial Stadium for a game on Sept. 20, 2008, and Nebraska will travel to Blacksburg, Va., to play on Sept. 19, 2009. The schools have never played each other in the regular season. The Cornhuskers won the only meeting between the schools, 41-21 in the 1996 Orange Bowl game.

Virginia Tech won the ACC Coastal Division in 2005 but lost to Florida State in the conference championship game. The Hokies finished with an 11-2 record and No. 7 national ranking.

● Kickoff for the Cornhuskers' game against USC at the Los Angeles Coliseum on Sept. 16 has been set for 7 p.m. CDT — 5 p.m. PDT. ABC will televise the game nationally.

● The Cornhuskers are scheduled to move to their new locker room in the Tom and Nancy Osborne Complex in late July. The \$50 million project at the north end of Memorial Stadium will give the Nebraska football team state-of-the-art facilities. The new locker room is about twice the size of the old one, which the team has used since 1973. The complex also includes offices, a new weight room, an athletic medicine area and meeting and film rooms.

● Adam Blankenship, a member of the Cornhuskers' 2004 recruiting class from Tulsa, Okla., received a scholarship release in late April. Blankenship played sparingly at defensive end last season after redshirting as a freshman. He was moved to middle linebacker late in the spring.

● Ricky Henry, a member of Nebraska's 2006 recruiting class, is headed for North Dakota State College of Science after not meeting academic requirements. Henry is an offensive lineman from Omaha Burke. ■



## NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2007

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
Demetrious Davis	DT	6-2	285	4.9	St. Joseph, Mo. (Benton)
Niles Paul	WR	6-1	200	4.4	Omaha (North)
DeAndre West	ATH	6-1	195	4.4	Oakland, Calif. (Wilson)



Niles Paul



Demetrious Davis

# Huskies Searching for Secondary Help

**California trio among defensive back recruits considering NU**

**By Doug Horwich**

**N**ebbraska has had a great deal of success recruiting cornerbacks during head coach Bill Callahan's three-year tenure, but the past two Husker classes have been heavy on junior college transfers and light on high school players.

While the Husker staff certainly scored major recruiting victories by signing cornerbacks Zackary Bowman in the 2005 class and Andre Jones in the 2006 class, both players came in with only two years of eligibility, making them more quick fixes than long-term solutions.

The Husker staff did manage to sign two high school players in the 2006 class who are capable of playing cornerback in Ricky Thenarse and Anthony West, but both players could also end up at one of the safety positions as well.

Cornerback figures to be a serious focus for the Husker staff in the 2007 recruiting class, and a number of players are giving Nebraska an early look. One such player is Andre Christian (5-foot-10, 175 pounds, 4.4-second 40-yard dash) from Skyline

High School in Oakland, Calif. Christian visited Lincoln for the Red-White Spring Game and came away impressed.

"It was great, actually," Christian said. "It was just seeing all of the fans coming out to support them for a scrimmage game. That was pretty much the highlight; there was so much support — unbelievable."

Christian took a full tour of the Nebraska campus and liked what he saw. "Their facilities were magnificent," he said. "Their academic support, I was very impressed with that."

Christian also had a chance to meet Coach Callahan. "It was great," he said. "I got a chance to meet the whole coaching staff and what they

are about and what they are trying to do with the whole program.

"They were giving out some pretty good information. The trip was very informative, and I got a feel for the school, environment and the school around it."

Christian currently has written offers from Nebraska and San Diego State, but more offers are likely on the way soon. Despite his strong interest in the Husker program, Christian is unlikely to make his decision until later in the year. "I have thought about making that decision (of committing), but I haven't," he said. "I must put some real thought into it. There is a chance."

Another California prospect the

## RIVALS.COM'S NEBRASKA TOP 15

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
1. *Niles Paul	WR	6-1	200	4.4	Omaha (North)
2. Harland Gunn	C	6-2	320	5.2	Omaha (Central)
3. Phillip Bates	QB	6-2	200	4.48	Omaha (North)
4. Jared Crick	DE	6-6	245	4.8	Cozad
5. Kyle Dooley	C	6-2	310	5.2	Papillion (Papio-LaVista)
6. Noah Keller	ILB	6-1	230	4.6	Kearney
7. Josh Cherry	K	6-1	170	4.8	McCook
8. Steve Heiman	QB	6-2	180	4.62	Papillion (Papio-LaVista)
9. Aaron Schulte	OT	6-6	320	5.2	Norfolk (Catholic)
10. Bryson Studnicka	OLB	6-3	210	4.65	Clay Center
11. Zane Abner	WR	6-4	185	4.56	Atkinson (West Holt)
12. Jake Gdowski	DT	6-3	260	4.74	Grand Island
13. Matt May	S	6-1	185	4.5	Imperial (Chase County)
14. Alex Stover	DT	6-3	260	5.0	Gretna
15. B.J. Lawrence	CB	5-11	195	4.4	Omaha (Northwest)

\*Committed to Nebraska

For more daily recruiting information, visit [HuskiesIllustrated.com](http://HuskiesIllustrated.com), a member of the Rivals.com network.



Husker coaches have their eyes on is Anthony Gildon (6-1, 185, 4.4), a cornerback from Oaks Christian High School in Westlake Village. Gildon currently has offers from Nebraska, Oregon, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi State and Tennessee.

Despite an impressive early list of offers, Gildon has Nebraska as one of his clear front-runners. "I'm planning on making a trip to Nebraska as soon as possible," he said. "I want to get out there as soon as school is over with."

"I've been talking to Coach (John) Blake, and he's been telling me about the fans and the school. Aside from talking to him, I probably talk to the Oregon coaches the most, but I do like talking to Coach Blake, Coach (Phil) Fulmer from Tennessee and Coach (Ron) English from Michigan, too. Those are my top four schools right now."

Blake has been educating Gildon about Husker football, and the corner prospect is anxious to see it for himself. "I've heard the fans are crazy there, and I'm looking forward to seeing it," he said. "I know Lincoln is all about Nebraska football, and they always have really good defensive backs, so I'm looking forward to my trip there."

Gildon is a player who could make a decision before his season starts, but he's unlikely to pull the trigger until he has a chance to visit the NU campus.

Nebraska's coaching staff always has made California a priority recruiting territory, but they seem to have turned up the heat on the Golden State even more this year than before.

Another cornerback who has received a great deal of interest thus far from the Husker staff is Anthony Wright (6-0, 180, 4.5) from Compton, Calif.

Wright currently has written offers from Nebraska, Colorado State and Baylor, but is also drawing early interest from Arizona State, California, Colorado, Oregon and UCLA.

Wright is a versatile player who is capable of playing on either side of the football, and at several different positions. "They're all telling me I'll be listed as an athlete and start out on both sides," he said. "I'm fine with letting them decide where it is I fit best, though. Just wherever I can get on the field the quickest because, no matter where I go, I want to go in and have the opportunity to play right away."

"If I had to say, I think I probably fit a little better on defense. The only

## RECRUITING NOTES

# West's Pledge Ends Dry Spell

By Rick Shaw

It took more than five months for the Nebraska football program to score its second commitment for the recruiting class of 2007. Given the athleticism of that player, it certainly was time well spent.

DeAndre West, a 6-foot-1, 195-pound defensive back/running back from Oakland, Calif. (Wilson Prep), delivered his pledge to Husker coaches on May 15. He joined Niles Paul, a wide receiver from Omaha (North), on the commit list. Paul, who was named a pre-season National Top-100 player by Rivals.com, said "yes" to his Nebraska offer back on Jan. 2, and defensive tackle Demetrious Davis of St. Joseph, Mo. (Benton), was added to the list on June 2.



DeAndre West

"West has committed to Nebraska," Wilson Prep head coach Desmond Gumbs said. "He is very excited about coming. It is like a dream come true for him."

As a junior, West ran for more than 1,500 yards and 15 touchdowns as a running back. As a linebacker on defense, he racked up more than 100 tackles, including six sacks.

According to his coach, West likely will find a place in the defensive secondary when he arrives in Lincoln. Blessed with outstanding speed (4.4-second 40-yard dash) and strength (15 reps of 225 pounds on the bench press), West will provide the Huskers with a physical presence at either

the cornerback or safety positions.

"He was always around the ball," Gumbs said. "Wherever the ball was, he was there. His motor just does not shut off. He is vicious. He is very physical, and he is going to run into you. He kind of reminds me of Jack Tatum. I know I'm dating myself, but he is just a big hitter."

Gumbs said West "is a finisher. He could play anywhere on the field, but at corner or safety he's going to be a standout."

West, who chose Nebraska over offers from Arizona and Boise State, recently grabbed the attention of a number of college programs on the West Coast. Washington State, San Diego State, UCLA and Utah were also in hot pursuit of the talented blue-chipper.

Gumbs said West is solid on Nebraska. "That will be the only visit DeAndre takes," the coach said.

\*\*\*

Who will be next to join Nebraska's commitment list? Several players appear to be leaning in the Huskers' direction and could join the fold before fall, including:

● **Blake Lawrence, Linebacker, 6-3, 205, Overland Park, Kan. (Shawnee Mission West)** — Lawrence, who claims offers from Nebraska, Colorado State, Kansas, Kansas State, Michigan State, Missouri and Texas Tech, wants to solidify a college decision by July. The Huskers and Jayhawks appear to be the teams to beat.

● **Victor Reynolds, Cornerback, 6-0, 195, Oak Creek, Wis.** — Reynolds currently favors Nebraska over offers from Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Reynolds earned all-state honors as a junior after tallying 83 tackles and six interceptions.

\*\*\*

Nebraska appeared to be in the driver's seat for Jarrett Lee, a 6-3, 210-pound quarterback from Brenham, Texas, but things changed. Lee announced in late May that he had chosen LSU over the Huskers and close to 30 other scholarship offers, including Arizona, Kansas State, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and TCU. Lee passed for 3,425 yards and 40 touchdowns as a junior. ■



# RIVALS.COM'S NATIONAL TOP 100

No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown	Pos.	51	Broderick Green	6-1	230	4.57	Little Rock, AR	RB
1	Jimmy Clausen	6-3	200	4.7	Westlake Village, CA	PQB	52	Kenny Rowe	6-2	216	4.91	Long Beach, CA	WDE
2	Marvin Austin	6-3	300	4.83	Washington, D.C.	DT	53	Andre Jones	6-4	305	5.66	El Paso, TX	DT
3	Willy Korn	6-2	200	4.55	Duncan, SC	DQB	54	Marshall Jones	6-0	185	4.5	Westlake Village, CA	S
4	Caleb King	5-11	186	4.4	Lilburn, GA	RB	55	Jacoby Monroe	6-2	270	4.6	Jacksonville, FL	SDE
5	Everson Griffen	6-4	266	4.46	Avondale, AZ	SDE	56	Brandon Saine	6-0	200	4.4	Piqua, OH	RB
6	Josh Oglesby	6-7	315	5.3	Milwaukee, WI	OT	57	Bryan Bulaga	6-5	270	4.78	Woodstock, IL	OT
7	Torrey Davis	6-5	290	4.8	Seffner, FL	DT	58	Jordan Bernstine	5-11	195	4.43	Des Moines, IA	S
8	Tray Allen	6-4	305	5.3	Grand Prairie, TX	OG	59	Marcus Gilchrist	5-11	175	4.45	High Point , NC	CB
9	Chris Galippo	6-3	235	4.6	Anaheim, CA	OLB	60	Kristofer O'Dowd	6-4	275	5.16	Tucson, AZ	OT
10	Terrance Toliver	6-5	180	4.47	Hempstead, TX	WR	61	Mike Ragone	6-4	221	4.4	Cherry Hill, NJ	TE
11	Eric Berry	6-0	180	4.55	Fairburn, GA	CB	62	Alphonso Bryant	6-0	190	4.46	Homestead, FL	WR
12	John Chiles	6-1	195	4.4	Mansfield, TX	ATH	63	Quintin Richardson	6-4	270	5.0	Columbia, SC	OT
13	John Brantley	6-3	190	4.64	Ocala, FL	PQB	64	Matt Summers-Gavin	6-5	271	5.1	San Francisco, CA	OC
14	Joe McKnight	5-11	180	4.6	River Ridge, LA	ATH	65	Javario Burkes	6-4	311	5.78	Phoenix, AZ	OG
15	Ryan Miller	6-6	278	5.47	Littleton, CO	OT	66	Sidell Corley	6-4	250	4.8	Mobile, AL	SDE
16	Noel Devine	5-8	175	4.4	North Fort Myers, FL	RB	67	Ben Wells	6-0	174	4.45	Beaumont, TX	CB
17	Joseph Barksdale	6-5	305	4.9	Detroit, MI	DT	68	Pat Bostick	6-3	220	4.85	Lancaster, PA	PQB
18	Tyrod Taylor	6-1	193	4.55	Hampton, VA	DQB	69	Trinton Sturdivant	6-6	285	5.1	Wadesboro, NC	OT
19	Arrelious Benn	6-2	210	4.45	Washington, D.C.	WR	70	Austin Box	6-3	215	4.6	Enid, OK	OLB
20	Ronald Johnson	6-0	177	4.5	Muskegon, MI	CB	71	Phelon Jones	6-1	185	4.4	Mobile, AL	CB
21	Martez Wilson	6-4	228	4.5	Chicago, IL	WDE	72	Enrique Davis	6-0	214	4.4	Lynn Haven, FL	RB
22	Marc Tyler	6-0	215	4.5	Westlake Village, CA	RB	73	Cameron Heyward	6-7	270	4.85	Suwanee, GA	DT
23	Dwight Jones	6-5	210	-	Burlington, NC	WR	74	Malcolm Williams	6-3	205	4.43	Garland, TX	WR
24	Allen Bailey	6-3	252	4.95	Darien, GA	SDE	75	John Clay	6-2	222	4.5	Racine, WI	RB
25	Deonte Thompson	6-0	180	4.4	Belle Glade, FL	WR	76	Antonio Jeremiah	6-5	290	5.05	Hilliard, OH	DT
26	Gary Gray	5-10	170	4.5	Columbia, SC	CB	77	Michael Keck	6-5	215	4.5	Harrisonville, MO	WDE
27	Ryan Mallett	6-7	235	-	Texarkana, TX	PQB	78	Robert Hughes	6-0	220	4.6	Chicago, IL	RB
28	Eugene Clifford	6-2	190	4.45	Cincinnati, OH	S	79	Joe Haden	5-11	185	4.4	Fort Washington, MD	ATH
29	Anthony Davis	6-6	305	5.2	Piscataway, NJ	OT	80	Raymond Carter	5-11	187	4.4	Los Angeles, CA	RB
30	Brian Price	6-0	262	4.9	Los Angeles, CA	DT	81	Keith Nichol	6-2	180	4.68	Lowell, MI	DQB
31	James Wilson	6-6	310	4.9	St. Augustine, FL	OG	82	Derrick Stephens	6-3	220	4.58	Houston, TX	ILB
32	Aaron Hernandez	6-4	235	4.58	Bristol, CT	TE	83	Donovan Warren	6-0	175	4.4	Long Beach, CA	CB
33	Michael Huey	6-5	290	-	Kilgore, TX	OG	84	Chris Culliver	6-1	190	4.38	Garner, NC	S
34	Dionte Allen	6-0	175	4.4	Orchard Lake, MI	CB	85	Aaron Corp	6-4	195	4.6	Villa Park, CA	DQB
35	Armando Allen	5-9	181	4.31	Hialeah, FL	APB	86	Ted Laurent	6-2	285	4.9	Powder Springs, GA	DT
36	Chad Jones	6-3	215	4.55	Baton Rouge, LA	S	87	Chris Forcier	6-3	185	4.53	San Diego, CA	PQB
37	Curtis Brown	6-0	174	4.4	Gilmer, TX	CB	88	Major Wright	6-1	200	4.5	Fort Lauderdale, FL	S
38	Lee Ziemba	6-7	295	5.17	Rogers, AR	OT	89	Greg Little	6-3	208	4.5	Durham, NC	ATH
39	Lennon Creer	6-1	190	4.5	Tatum, TX	RB	90	Ahmad Paige	6-3	175	4.39	Sterlington, LA	WR
40	Duval Kamara	6-5	209	4.6	Hoboken, NJ	WR	91	Aundre McGaskey	6-4	290	5.2	La Marque, TX	OG
41	Richetti Jones	6-3	234	4.78	Dallas, TX	SDE	92	Cliff Matthews	6-5	230	4.7	Cheraw, SC	WDE
42	Niles Paul	6-1	200	4.4	Omaha, NE	WR	93	Nick Sukay	6-3	200	4.5	Greensburg, PA	WR
43	Mike Paulus	6-5	220	4.9	Syracuse, NY	PQB	94	Jay Smith	6-2	195	4.47	Virginia Beach, VA	WR
44	D'Angelo McCray	6-5	265	4.64	Jacksonville, FL	SDE	95	Christian Ballard	6-4	280	4.75	Lawrence, KS	TE
45	Mark Barnes	6-3	190	4.57	Columbia, SC	WR	96	Brandon Paul	5-10	185	4.4	Tallahassee, FL	ATH
46	Ben Martin	6-5	220	4.5	Cincinnati, OH	SDE	97	Nick Claytor	6-6	312	5.6	Gainesville, GA	OT
47	Kerry Murphy	6-5	315	5.1	Hoover, AL	DT	98	Brandon Gibson	6-2	190	4.53	Mobile, AL	WR
48	Chris Strong	6-2	240	-	Batesville, MS	ILB	99	Travian Robertson	6-4	230	4.6	Laurinburg, NC	SDE
49	John Brown	6-2	285	-	Lakeland, FL	DT	100	Will Blackwell	6-4	289	5.0	West Monroe, LA	DT
50	Chris Donald	6-2	220	4.6	Huntingdon, TN	OLB							

**For more daily recruiting information, visit [HuskersIllustrated.com](http://HuskersIllustrated.com), a member of the Rivals.com network.**

thing is, I want to see how many guys they have at running back and defensive back before I get too carried away. If it's going to be defense, though, I like safety over corner. That probably suits me better because I'm a physical type player."

Wright will be looking not only at football but also at academics. "Education has to be there, you know?," he said. "I know Nebraska and UCLA both have good degrees, so that's in their favor."

Wright's mother will also have a say in his ultimate decision. "My mom and I haven't had a chance to talk it over much yet," he said. "But, when we do talk about it, she says she'd like to see me stay close by, but she also says it's my decision to make, and she'll support me no matter where I choose to go."

Wright had a stellar junior season and is sure to attract more offers with a solid senior performance. "On defense, I had 51 tackles, two interceptions, a forced fumble and a blocked field goal," he said. "On offense, I think I had 100 carries for 1,020

yards and six touchdowns. I also caught three passes for 90 yards and a touchdown. I was named first-team all-league as a running back and the MVP of my team, so it was a good year."

Wright is unlikely to make a decision in the near future and may wait a few months to see which schools come through with official offers. "I don't really have a top list yet," he said. "It's hard for a guy like me because one minute you have basically nothing and the next minute it's like 'boom!'"

However, the Huskers remain in good shape for Wright's commitment, and it's unlikely that he would make a decision before visiting the Husker campus. "I know I like how Nebraska runs the ball a lot and the fact they have a good tradition of winning," he said. "I used to love them when I was little. I think it was like 1996 or 1997 when they were so good, and I liked watching them when they played on TV. I'm probably going to take a recruiting trip there sometime in September, but I haven't set it up yet, though." ■



# 2006 NEBRASKA SIGNEES

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown (High School/Junior College)
Pierre Allen	DE	6-5	222	Denver, Colo. (Thomas Jefferson HS)
Steve Allen	LB	6-2	230	Delray Beach, Fla. (Atlantic HS/Fresno City, Calif., CC)
Cruz Barrett	OL	6-4	315	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland HS)
**Major Culbert	DB	5-11	198	Harbor City, Calif. (Nathaniel Narbonne HS)
*Victory Haines	OL	6-7	285	Logan, Utah (Logan HS/Snow, Utah, College)
***Ricky Henry	OL	6-3	280	Omaha, Neb. (Omaha Burke HS)
Will Henry	WR	6-5	195	El Paso, Texas (J.M. Hanks HS)
*Jacob Hickman	OL	6-3	270	Bakersfield, Calif. (Centennial HS)
Menelik Holt	WR	6-4	215	San Diego, Calif. (St. Augustine HS)
Seth Jensen	DT	6-3	275	Fort Morgan, Colo. (Fort Morgan HS)
Brandon Johnson	DT	6-3	312	Chicago, Ill. (Marshall HS/Graceland University/Compton, Calif., CC)
Andre Jones	DB	6-0	192	Fort Walton Beach, Fla. (Choctawatchee HS/Kentucky/Fresno City, Calif., CC)
D.J. Jones	OL	6-5	300	Omaha, Neb. (Omaha Central HS)
Ben Martin	DE	6-4	265	Lincoln, Neb. (Lincoln Southwest HS)
Mike McNeill	TE	6-4	215	Kirkwood, Mo. (Kirkwood HS)
Carl Nicks	OL	6-5	325	Salinas, Calif. (North Salinas HS/New Mexico St./Hartnell, Calif., JC)
Maurice Purify	WR	6-4	210	Eureka, Calif. (Eureka HS/San Francisco City College)
Mike Smith	DE	6-6	260	Las Vegas, Nev. (Palo Verde HS)
*Tyrell Spain	WR	6-3	190	San Diego, Calif. (Hoover HS/San Diego Mesa Coll.)
Ricky Thenarse	DB	6-0	185	Los Angeles, Calif. (Jordan HS)
Anthony West	DB	6-0	195	San Diego, Calif. (Point Loma HS)
Keith Williams	OL	6-5	310	Florissant, Mo. (McCluer North HS)
Kenny Wilson	RB	6-0	220	Liberal, Kan. (Liberal HS/Butler County, Kan., CC)
Corey Young	DB	6-0	190	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North HS)

\*Enrolled and went through spring practice

\*\*Scholarship pulled pending resolution of off-the-field incident

\*\*\*Did not meet academic requirements and will attend North Dakota State College of Science

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# THE BIG 12

## Back to Work

*Quarterback is among the reasons defending champs will be hard-pressed to repeat*

**By Mike Babcock**

**D**efending national champion Texas wasn't going to be complacent even before versatile Vince Young announced he would forgo his senior season in favor of the NFL. Coach Mack Brown was looking ahead almost as soon as the Rose Bowl game victory against USC was in the books.

Brown sought advice from former Longhorns coach Darrell Royal, as well as other coaches who had won national titles, and was told to return to work immediately. So that's what he did.

"Our entire staff said let's don't get into all the speaking, all the traveling. We can enjoy winning it all without taking away from our job. And our job is to go back and win," said Brown.

"This team hasn't won any (games) for this year."

The Longhorns will take a 20-game winning streak into the season, however, as they try to repeat as national champions, something that has happened only eight times since the Associated Press established the first national poll in 1936 — most recently in 2003-04 USC, of course.

Three programs have produced back-to-back championships twice: Nebraska (1970-71, 1994-95), Oklahoma (1955-56, 1974-75) and Alabama (1964-65, 1978-79). Texas would be the fourth, also having won titles in 1969 and 1970.

Like Brown and his assistants, returning Longhorn players have responded to that considerable challenge. "We had an outstanding off-season program. And we had our toughest spring and most physical spring because we had more competition," Brown said. "The guys really worked hard to try to go back and continue to do what they've been doing, and do it with a great attitude."

Attitude and commitment are important, but only when combined with talent. And Texas lost a lot of that besides Young, including three All-Americans: offensive tackle Jonathan Scott, defensive tackle Rodrique Wright and safety Michael Huff, who also won the Jim Thorpe Award.



Linebacker Aaron Harris was a third-team All-American. Cornerback Cedric Griffin, who started 44 games (like Scott), was first-team all-conference. And tight end David Thomas finished as the Longhorns' career leader at his position in receptions, receiving yards and touchdowns.

Even so, Young's loss is probably the most significant. His successor won't have taken a collegiate snap when Texas opens against North Texas, and a week later takes on Ohio State.

Not only that, but one of two candidates to start at quarterback, Jevan Snead, was still in high school last season. And the other, Colt McCoy, is a redshirted freshman. Granted, Texas recruits well, in a fertile recruiting area; Snead and McCoy are both from Texas. But conventional wisdom is, freshman quarterbacks and championships of any sort go together like water and oil.

Neither gained an edge during spring practice, and "right now we would plan on playing both of them next fall unless someone separates, for any number of reasons, between now and the start of fall," said Brown. "We feel like we would need both of them . . . one of them may struggle."

Conventional wisdom also is, alternating quarterbacks rarely works.

Quarterback is among the reasons Texas will be hard-pressed to get to the Big 12 championship game in Kansas City, much less the BCS National Championship Game in Glendale, Ariz.

The Sooners have an experienced, albeit young, quarter-



back in Rhett Bomar — also a Texan, by the way — to go with a Heisman Trophy candidate running back in Adrian Peterson and an outstanding defense. Bomar became the starter in the second game of the season and didn't relinquish the job, finishing as the offensive MVP after directing a 17-14 Holiday Bowl victory against Oregon.

Though being settled at quarterback when the season begins is important, "I've never felt it's all bad to have competition," Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops said during the spring.

Experienced quarterbacks will be neither the rule nor the exception in the Big 12, with five and possibly six teams being led by returning starters — only two of whom are seniors, Nebraska's Zac Taylor and Baylor's Shawn Bell. Kansas State has two senior quarterbacks who have started, Dylan Meier and Allen Webb, but the returning starter is sophomore Allen Everidge.

The Wildcats' quarterback situation is the Big 12's in microcosm, you could say. New coach Ron Prince also has a redshirted freshman (Kevin Lopina) and a true freshman (Josh Freeman) who could win the starting job as competition continues during preseason practice.

Young isn't the conference's only quarterback of note to depart. Cody Hodges, Brad Smith, Reggie McNeil and Joel Klatt also are gone, with young players replacing them.

Hodges' successor at Texas Tech will be sophomore Graham Harrell or redshirted freshman Chris Todd, meaning for the first time since 2002, Mike Leach won't have a fifth-year senior directing an offense that has featured the nation's leading passer in each of his six seasons as coach.

Smith's successor at Missouri will be sophomore Chase Daniel. McNeil's successor at Texas A&M will be sophomore Stephen McGee. And Klatt's successor at Colorado will be, in all likelihood, either Bernard Jackson or Brian White, both of whom are juniors.

The other new quarterback is redshirted freshman Kerry Meier at Kansas. The other returning starters are junior Bret Meyer at Iowa State and sophomore Bobby Reid at Oklahoma State.

The youth at quarterback reflects a trend not just at that position and not just in the Big 12. Because of scholarship limits, more and more recruits, many of them with unrealistic expectations of quickly moving on to the next level, are promised the opportunity to play right away.

In addition to Snead and McCoy, several young players will fill crucial roles at Texas, among them tailback Jamaal Charles, the Big 12 offensive newcomer of the year; linebackers Rashad Bobino, Rodrick Muckelroy and Sergio Kindle, and tight end Jermichael Finley.

Muckelroy and Finley are redshirted freshmen, Kindle a true freshman.

Oklahoma had a young team last season, and it will still be young. Bomar's receivers are as young as he is, for example. Malcolm Kelly, Juaquin Iglesias and Manuel Johnson are sophomores, as are defensive backs Nic Harris and Reggie Smith, both of whom started games as true freshmen.

The Sooners "have a chance to be really special defensively," said Stoops. "We're just so much further along in our understanding in our concepts of our defense and how we play."

One thing is certain: they'll play fast. Smith, a starter in 10 games, is among eight returning on defense. The others are ends C.J. Ah You, the Big 12 defensive newcomer of the year, and Calvin Thibodeaux; tackle Carl Pendleton, linebackers Rufus Alexander and Zach Latimer; safety Lewis Baker and cornerback D.J. Wolfe, whom Smith joins after moving from safety in the spring.

Oklahoma's offense is less experienced with tackle Chris Messner the only other returning starter besides Bomar, Kelly and Peterson, who's healthy and looking like he did as a true freshman.

Despite the losses, Texas has comparable talent on both sides of the ball, including three post-season honors candidates, all seniors, in the offensive line: Justin Blalock, Lyle Sendlein and Kasey Studdard. In addition to clearing the way for Charles, they'll help protect the young quarterbacks.

The Longhorns' other returning starters on offense are: wide receivers Quan Cosby,

Billy Pittman and Limas Sweed and running back Selvin Young, who has been hampered by injuries. Besides Bobino, the returning defensive starters are: ends Tim Crowder and Brian Robison, tackle Frank Okam, linebacker Robert Killebrew, cornerback Tarell Brown and safety Michael Griffin.

While the Oct. 7 meeting between Texas and Oklahoma in Dallas likely will decide the division, and probably the conference title, the rest of the division could finish in about any order.

Texas Tech still has its big and talented cast of thousands, it seems, at wide receiver but the Red Raiders must replace, in addition to Hodges and others, running back Taurean Henderson, who defined the term "all-purpose," and safety Dwayne Slay, the Big 12's leading tackler.

Baylor has a new offensive coordinator and a new offense, similar to Tech's. Coach Guy Morriss has first-hand knowledge of the system, having been on staff with Leach at Valdosta State in the early 1990s and then at Kentucky before Morriss was the Wildcats' head coach in 2001-02.

"It's just kind of an organized hully-gully deal, but the kids enjoy it," said Morriss, who also is coaching the offensive line now. "We've got great skill positions here in the



Heisman Trophy candidate Adrian Peterson has left many defenders in his wake in rushing for 3,033 yards and 29 touchdowns in his first two seasons at Oklahoma.



state of Texas, and all these kids want to come out of high school and catch a hundred balls a year.

"It's an exciting brand of ball if it's executed properly, high-scoring, very explosive."

Texas A&M's offense was fairly high-scoring last season, ranking third in the Big 12, but the Aggie defense, once known as the "Wrecking Crew," left much to be desired, which is why coach Dennis Franchione has a new defensive coordinator and two new secondary coaches.

Oklahoma State won three non-conference games to begin the Mike Gundy era but lost seven of eight conference games. "We're much better physically than we were," Gundy said.

"We're a better football team in all areas right now."

Nebraska, which could be the only North Division team in the Top 25, appears to be positioned to play in the Big 12 championship game for the first time since 1999.

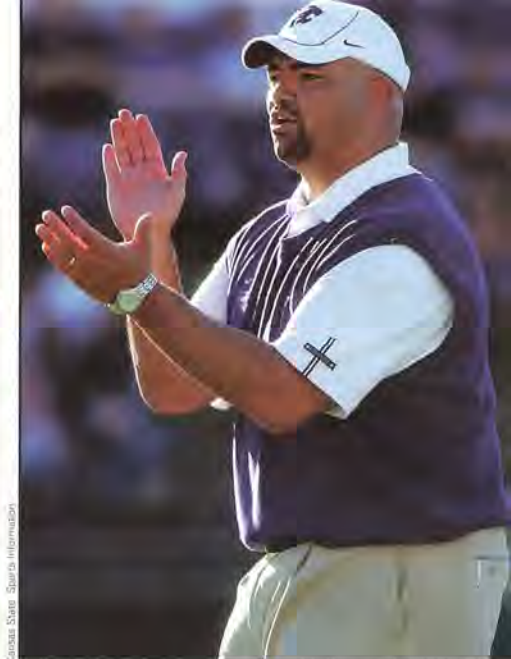
The Cornhuskers have an experienced quarterback in Taylor and a solid defense, led by senior end Adam Carriker and junior middle linebacker Corey McKeon, the team's leading tackler.

Defensively, Nebraska is especially deep at linebacker and especially thin at safety, plus tackles Le Kevin Smith and Titus Adams have to be replaced. Offensively, the Cornhuskers are unproven in the line and at running back, with the departure of Cory Ross. As was the case last season, coach Bill Callahan went looking for help on both sides of the ball in junior colleges.

Being picked to win the division is fine, but "you've got to earn that," Callahan said. "You've got to conclude the season with that in mind. I think all of those projections are great for the fans, and it's good reading. But I tell you, honestly, it's what you do at the end. That's all that matters. We're just trying to be the best team we can be. And we've focused on that concept from the day I got here."

Even though Iowa State plays host to Nebraska — the same day Texas and Oklahoma play — the Cyclones have a difficult inter-divisional conference schedule, opening at Texas, playing at Oklahoma the week after the Nebraska game and then playing host to Texas Tech a week after that.

Dan McCarney, the dean of Big 12 coaches with the retirement of Kansas State's Bill Snyder, has an experienced quarterback in Meyer and



The Big 12 features two new coaches. Dan Hawkins (left) replaced Gary Barnett at Colorado and Ron Prince (above) took over for Bill Snyder at Kansas State.

offensive starters returning at every position except right guard, but the defense needs to be rebuilt and the team has to learn how to finish. The Cyclones have lost their final regular-season game the past two years with the conference championship game on the line.

Meyer's presence is comforting. Having an experienced quarterback "makes a big difference. It really does," said McCarney. During spring practice "there was just a confidence and calmness out there that the guy in the huddle leading the offense has been there and he's done so many positive things."

Missouri, Kansas and Colorado appear to be capable of finishing in the upper half of the division, depending on several factors, including how their new young quarterbacks perform.

Daniel will be more of a distributor in Missouri's hurry-up offense, post-Smith, and two of those to whom he'll distribute it are tight ends Martin Rucker and Chase Coffman.

Even though Meier's only experience at Kansas is watching from the sideline during games, he won the starting job "outright" in the spring, coach Mark Mangino said. "He earned it. And now we're ready to have a cohesive No. 1 unit work together during two-a-days and be ready for the first game."

The Jayhawks open with Northwestern State, on a nonconference schedule that has to prepare them for a Big 12 opener at Nebraska,

still stinging from a 40-15 embarrassment at Lawrence.

Colorado's Dan Hawkins joins Kansas State's Prince as the Big 12's new head coaches. The Buffaloes have rallied around Hawkins in the wake of the off-field problems that led to Gary Barnett's contract being bought out. Whether the emotional wounds have healed is uncertain.

Colorado did advance to the Big 12 championship game for the fourth time in the past five seasons, but lost to Texas 70-3, eight days after losing to Nebraska 30-3. Hawkins brought a high-scoring offensive system from Boise State. But the Buffaloes' spring game produced two offensive touchdowns.

Hawkins was unconcerned. The scrimmage "was very much like we thought," he said.

As with Hawkins, Prince didn't seem concerned about his team's uncertainty at quarterback, while acknowledging the position's importance "We think it's the most challenging of all of the positions in all of sports," he said. "I don't think anyone, maybe other than a pro golfer, would really understand the type of scrutiny and pressure a quarterback plays under. And he has so many other people that are looking to him to lead the team. So all of those things go into our evaluation of a quarterback."

Prince and Hawkins will settle on starters in the preseason. They have that much in common with Texas's Brown. ■



# **SCOUTING REPORTS**

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# IOWA STATE CYCLONES

Oct. 7, Ames, Iowa

**R**ewind to 2004, the final game of the regular season. With a victory against Missouri, Iowa State will represent the North Division in the Big 12 championship game.

The Cyclones line up fourth-and-1 at the Missouri 6-yard line with the score tied at 14 and 1:02 remaining. A 24-yard field goal will send them to the title game. The kick misses.

Missouri wins with a field goal in overtime.

Rewind to 2005, the final game of the regular season. With a victory against Kansas, Iowa State will represent the North Division in the Big 12 championship game.

The Cyclones, who have allowed the fewest touchdowns in the Big 12 in conference play, are protecting a 21-14 lead with 1:49 remaining. Kansas is at its own 42-yard line, following a Cyclone punt. The title game is within reach. Forty-four seconds later, the score is tied.

Kansas wins with a field goal in overtime.

As baseball legend Yogi Berra would say, it was déjà vu all over again.

The Cyclones have played Lucy to their fans' Charlie Brown the past two seasons, snatching the ball away just as trusting Charlie was about to put his foot into it. Such a metaphor was especially apt last season, with two of Iowa State's other three losses also coming in overtime.

Opportunity's door was wide open for coach Dan McCarney, only to be slammed shut. And now the Cyclones are likely to have a much more difficult time prying that door open because of the Big 12's inter-divisional scheduling system, which has them playing Texas, Oklahoma and Texas Tech, after playing Baylor, Oklahoma State and Texas A&M the past two seasons.

In addition, they must do it with a defense that includes only two returning starters from a unit

described by McCarney as the best in his 11 seasons as head coach.

Only tackle Brent Curvey and cornerback DeAndre Jackson are back.

The offense, in marked contrast, is cause for optimism, with 10 starters returning, including quarterback Bret Meyer, All-Big 12 wide receiver Todd Blythe, All-Big 12 center Scott Stephenson and tailback Stevie Hicks, who was hampered by injuries as a junior.

The Cyclones were 6-2 with Hicks in the starting lineup, 1-3 without him.

Iowa State's rushing attack lacked punch last season, averaging only 2.7 yards per carry — tying Nebraska for worst in the conference. Big plays on offense were in short supply, whether by passing or by rushing, a factor that contributed to the losses in close games.

That has to improve, and "with our receivers and our quarterback there's some real potential to do that," said McCarney. "We've got to continue to find more ways to get into the running game. That was something definitely lacking last year. Most of our big plays came in the throwing game. Hopefully, we can continue that and build it this year, find a way to get some more in the running game."

Meyer, just a junior, was productive, completing 62 percent of his passes for 2,876 yards and 19 touchdowns with only 10 interceptions. "He has all those intangibles that you're looking for," McCarney said. "He leads the offense with such a passion. And he's never satisfied."

He is durable as well. He was sacked a Big 12-high 39 times last season.

Stephenson is the hub of an experienced line responsible for providing Meyer more protection. The Cyclones' offensive interior averages over 310 pounds per man.

Iowa State Sports Information



**All-Big 12 receiver Todd Blythe caught 51 passes for 1,000 yards and nine touchdowns as a sophomore.**



Tackle Aaron Brant (6-7, 315 pounds) has started 34 consecutive games, while guard Seth Zehr (6-6, 300) has started 31 of the last 32.

Blythe, also a junior, caught nine of the touchdown passes and again will join converted quarterback Austin Flynn and Jon Davis in a trio of big and talented targets — although Davis suffered an Achilles injury during spring practice and his availability in the fall is uncertain.

The defense, depleted by exhausted eligibility, lost two other players to dismissal: end Jason Berryman, for repeated off-the-field-legal problems, and middle linebacker Matt Robertson, for testing positive for nutritional supplements banned by the NCAA. McCarney was encouraged by what he saw defensively during spring practice.

"It was very positive, a good thing to build on, and it gives us a lot of hope that we can have a real competitive, physical defense again this fall," he said.

The Cyclones led the Big 12 in both turnovers and turnover margin.

Curvey was credited with 61 tackles and 6.5 sacks — second on the team to Berryman's 7.5 — and Jackson intercepted five passes to tie for the conference lead.

Tyrone McKenzie is among those who will be stepping up on defense. He'll take over for Robertson in the middle after redshirting following his transfer from

Michigan State. He was the scout team defensive MVP last season. "We just have great hopes for him," said McCarney.

The surprise of the spring may have been James Smith, a redshirted freshman, who emerged from spring practice atop the depth chart at strong safety.

With the retirement of Bill Snyder at Kansas State, McCarney is the dean of Big 12 football coaches. He also is the winningest coach in Iowa State history, with a 52-77 record.

Although his winning percentage isn't close to .500, the Cyclones have been to five bowl games in the past six seasons after posting the third-worst record in major college football during the 1990s. "I guess I'm a survivor, 11 years' worth," McCarney said following Snyder's announcement. "I've seen a lot of coaches and players and administrators in all sports coming and going."

Despite the frustration of coming oh-so close the past two seasons, the enthusiasm of Cyclone fans seems undiminished. An estimated 15,000 traveled to the Houston Bowl last season, and Iowa State is well on its way to a goal of selling a school-record 30,000 season tickets for 2006.

Now, the Cyclones need to show they can finish things. ■



Iowa State Sports Information

**Senior defensive tackle Brent Curvey had 61 tackles and 6 1/2 sacks.**



## AT A GLANCE

**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
**NORTH DIVISION**

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

The Cyclones have experience on offense, beginning with **Bret Meyer**, who has started 24 consecutive games. The value of a veteran quarterback was apparent during spring practice because of a "confidence and a calmness that the guy in the huddle leading the offense has been there and he has done so many positive things," said coach **Dan McCarney**.

#### QUESTION MARKS

Among other things that have to be on McCarney's mind going into the fall: the defense must be rebuilt; the offense must develop big-play ability, and a starting punter must be identified.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Wide receiver **Todd Blythe** certainly didn't suffer from a sophomore jinx. He didn't catch anyone by surprise, but he did catch 51 passes for 1,000 yards — only the third receiver in Iowa State history to reach that total. Obviously, his size (6-5, 210) creates serious match-up problems in the secondary.

#### STEVIE WONDER

Because of injuries, senior tailback **Stevie Hicks**, an Omaha Creighton Prep grad, carried only 149 times last season, for 545 yards. As a sophomore, he rushed for 1,062 yards on 270 carries.

#### MR. TOUCHDOWN

Senior fullback **Ryan Kock** made the most of his limited opportunities last season. He scored a team-high 13 touchdowns on his 54 carries.

#### 2005 RECORD: 7-5 CONFERENCE FINISH: 4-4

S 3	Illinois State	W, 32-21
S 10	Iowa	W, 23-3
S 23	@Army	W, 28-21
O 1	@Nebraska	L, 27-20 (ot)
O 8	Baylor	L, 23-13
O 15	@Missouri	L, 27-24 (ot)
O 22	Oklahoma State	W, 37-10
O 29	@Texas A&M	W, 42-14
N 5	Kansas State	W, 45-17
N 12	Colorado	W, 30-16
N 26	@Kansas	L, 24-21 (ot)
D 31	*vs. TCU	L, 27-24

\*Houston Bowl, Houston, Texas

### TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR <b>Todd Blythe</b>	6-5 210 Jr.	END <b>Kurtis Taylor</b>	6-3 250 Jr.
Euseph Messiah	5-10 171 So.	Nick Frere	6-2 240 So.
LT <b>Scott Fisher</b>	6-7 335 Sr.	NG Bryce Braaksma	6-4 260 Jr.
Landon Streit	6-5 305 Fr.	Matt Berg	6-4 260 Fr.
LG <b>Seth Zehr</b>	6-6 300 Sr.	DT <b>Brent Curvey</b>	6-0 305 Sr.
Tom Schmeling	6-3 290 So.	Stephon Dale	6-3 255 Fr.
C <b>Scott Stephenson</b>	6-4 305 Sr.	RE <b>Shawn Moorehead</b>	6-4 250 Sr.
Bastian Schaber	6-2 305 Jr.	Travis Ferguson	6-5 245 So.
RG Paul Fisher	6-7 325 Sr.	SLB Tyrone McKenzie	6-2 230 So.
Reggie Stephens	6-4 315 Fr.	Adam Carper	6-3 225 So.
RT <b>Aaron Brant</b>	6-7 320 Sr.	MLB <b>Matt Robertson</b>	6-1 225 Sr.
John Tjaden	6-7 305 Jr.	Adam Carper	6-3 225 So.
TE <b>Ben Bakema</b>	6-3 245 Jr.	WLB Alvin Bowen	6-4 220 Jr.
Walter Nickel	6-3 235 Sr.	Josh Raven	5-11 205 Fr.
WR <b>Austin Flynn</b>	6-1 200 Sr.	LCB <b>DeAndre Jackson</b>	6-0 192 Sr.
Nick Campbell	6-2 200 Sr.	Chris Brown	5-11 180 So.
QB <b>Bret Meyer</b>	6-3 208 Jr.	SS James Smith	5-8 191 Fr.
Kyle Van Winkle	6-6 217 Sr.	Caleb Berg	6-1 203 Jr.
TB <b>Stevie Hicks</b>	6-1 212 Sr.	FS Jon Banks	6-3 217 Jr.
Jason Harris	5-11 201 So.	-or Caleb Berg	6-1 203 Jr.
FB <b>Ryan Kock</b>	6-1 239 Sr.	RCB Chris Singleton	5-10 191 So.
Steven Ebner	5-10 229 Jr.	Steve Johnson	6-2 197 Fr.
PK <b>Bret Culbertson</b>	6-6 179 Jr.	P Michael Brandtner	6-1 198 Fr.

Returning starters in bold



# MISSOURI TIGERS

Nov. 4, Lincoln

**Y**es, Missouri is experienced. Coach Gary Pinkel has more players returning than at any time during his five years in Columbia. Seven starters are back on defense and eight on offense.

But the leading passer and leading rusher of a year ago are gone.

Are? Change that to the singular verb "is." They were one in the same. Brad Smith led the Tigers in both passing and rushing. He also led the Big 12 in rushing, for that matter.

The versatile quarterback did it all, starting every game, 48 of them, since arriving on campus, largely unheralded, from Youngstown, Ohio, in the summer of 2002.

With its hurry-up, no-huddle offense, Missouri ran 981 plays from scrimmage last season, the second-most in NCAA Division I-A. And Smith ran or passed on more than two-thirds of them.

For the season, he carried 229 times for 1,301 yards and 16 touchdowns. The Tiger tailbacks carried 219 times between them, with Tony Temple and Marcus Woods getting the most.

In short, Smith was synonymous with Pinkel's offense. Now, however, when Missouri opens the season against Murray State, he figures to be playing for the New York Jets.

He was a fourth-round draft pick, projected as a wide receiver.

The Tigers' offensive approach won't change dramatically post-Smith. But the quarterback's responsibilities will. "We're not going to run our quarterback 18 times a game like we did with Brad," Pinkel said. "We used Brad for obvious reasons in that way."

Smith's successor will be more of a distributor. "This opens up more opportunities for our tailbacks and our

tight ends and our receivers. I think our players are excited about that," said Pinkel.

"We're going to distribute the ball a little bit more, and rightfully so."

The chief distributor, based on experience and spring practice, is sophomore Chase Daniel, who held the top spot on the depth chart in competition with senior Brandon Coleman and sophomore Chase Patton. Daniel played well during the spring and was "clearly No. 1," Pinkel said.

"He loves to play. He's a heck of a competitor. And you can just see his skill level. He was very well coached in high school, and I think that is what has enabled him to come in here and compete at a pretty high level at such a young age. We're pleased with his progress."

Daniel was rated among the top high school quarterbacks in Texas, and Pinkel gave him opportunities when the outcome of games was in doubt to prepare him as Smith's successor.

As a result, "Chase is a very confident quarterback," said Pinkel.

Daniel completed 38-of-66 passes for 347 yards and one touchdown.

His confidence is bolstered by those around him. In addition to the

return of Temple and Woods, he has arguably the best receiving tight-end tandem in the country in junior Martin Rucker and sophomore Chase Coffman, each of whom caught 47 passes for a combined 1,070 yards last season.

Temple, who missed spring practice because of a shoulder injury, and Woods, who rolled an ankle near the end of spring, were sophomores last season. Back-up tailbacks Jimmy Jackson and Earl Goldsmith were redshirted freshmen. And Connell Davis was a true freshman who redshirted.



Missouri has a playmaker at defensive end in Brian Smith, who had 9 1/2 sacks.



"We were very young," Pinkel said. And "very talented."

They can "run tough" as well as "make people miss."

In addition to Rucker and Coffman, starting wide receivers Will Franklin and Brad Ekwerekwu return, providing several players to whom Daniel can distribute the ball.

And he can distribute it behind a line that averages more than 300 pounds per man and includes four returning starters, among them center Adam Spieker, a candidate for post-season honors.

The defense is built around Brian Smith, Jamar Smith, Dedrick Harrington and David Overstreet, all seniors. The front is experienced, with the top seven returning from a unit that limited Nebraska to a minus-2 yards rushing in the Tigers' 41-24 victory at Columbia.

Brian Smith is a playmaker at end — he was credited with a team-high 9 1/2 sacks — and he's complemented on the other side by Stryker Sulak and Xzavie Jackson.

Jamar Smith and Lorenzo Williams are returning starters at tackle, and Harrington and Marcus Bacon are returning starters at linebacker, Harrington in the middle, Bacon on the strong-side.

Cornhusker fans remember Overstreet, who was credited with 10 tackles and intercepted a pass in last season's

game. The free safety, who led the Tigers in tackles with 91, is the only returning starter in the secondary. However, Pinkel has called it the most athletic during his tenure.

Increased athleticism isn't limited to the secondary. As mentioned earlier, the same is true at tailback. "Last year, I thought, athletically we had some pretty high-level kids," Pinkel said. "They were just so young, and they hadn't played very much. So I think the experience factor is huge, as we all know."

A year can make a difference, in strength and speed as well as understanding.

Even though Missouri went to a bowl game for the second time in three seasons, coming from behind to defeat South Carolina in the Independence Bowl, Pinkel has his detractors. Despite Brad Smith's skills, the Tigers were barely .500 during his four seasons, at 25-23.

Depth has always been a concern, and it still is in the offensive line and the secondary. At the other positions on both sides of the ball, however, the Tigers are "going to be fine," said Pinkel. "I just think we have more players in position now than maybe we've had in the past that can play."

"I feel like we've made a little bit of progress." ■



Scott Brum

Martin Rucker combines with Chase Coffman to give MU a top tight end combination.



## AT A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

The Tigers have experienced starters and proven depth at tight end and in the defensive line. They run a lot of plays with **Gary Pinkel's** offense. But they could be more productive.

#### QUESTION MARKS

The most pressing question continues to be whether Pinkel can hold onto his job. His record in five seasons is 29-30. The secondary is unproven. In addition, the Tigers have to play North Division favorites Nebraska and Iowa State on the road.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKERS

**Martin Rucker** and **Chase Coffman** or Coffman and Rucker, take your pick. Barring injury, both will eventually surpass **Andy Gibler** (1979-82) as Missouri's career leader in pass receptions by a tight end. Gibler caught 101 passes for 1,290 yards and 10 touchdowns. Rucker goes into his junior season sixth on the list, with 66 catches for 830 yards and five touchdowns. Coffman's one season numbers are: 47-503-4.

#### PASS-RUN CAPABILITY

**Brad Smith** led the Big 12 in rushing, but his passing couldn't be ignored either. Missouri threw more passes than any conference team except Texas Tech. Although Pinkel has said the 6-1, 220-pound **Chase Daniel** will be more of a distributor than Smith, he was a dual-threat quarterback at Carroll High School in Southlake, Texas. He led Carroll to a 16-0 record and the Class 5A championship as a senior, passing for 4,617 yards and 49 touchdowns and rushing for 1,425 yards and 21 touchdowns.

# 3<sup>rd</sup>

**NORTH DIVISION**

#### 2005 RECORD: 7-5 CONFERENCE FINISH: 4-4

S 3	Arkansas St. (K.C.)	W, 44-17
S 10	New Mexico	L, 45-35
S 17	Troy	W, 52-21
O 1	Texas	L, 51-20
O 8	@Oklahoma State	W, 38-31
O 15	Iowa State	W, 27-24 (ot)
O 22	Nebraska	W, 41-24
O 29	@Kansas	L, 13-3
N 5	@Colorado	L, 41-12
N 12	Baylor	L, 31-16
N 19	@Kansas State	L, 36-28
D 30	*vs. South Carolina	W, 38-31

\*Independence Bowl, Shreveport, La.

### TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	<b>Will Franklin</b>	6-2 205 Jr.	DE	<b>Brian Smith</b>	6-4 230 Sr.
	Greg Bracey	6-2 200 Jr.		Josh Barbo	6-5 280 Jr.
LT	<b>Tyler Luellen</b>	6-6 300 Jr.	DT	<b>Lorenzo Williams</b>	6-2 285 Jr.
	Louis Pintola	6-4 305 Sr.		Evander Hood	6-3 280 So.
LG	Monte Wyrick	6-5 320 Jr.	NT	Jamar Smith	6-1 280 Sr.
	Ryan Madison	6-5 300 So.		DeMarcus Scott	6-0 285 Sr.
C	<b>Adam Spieker</b>	6-2 310 Jr.	DE	<b>Stryker Sulak</b>	6-4 245 So.
	Jason Stigall	6-2 305 Fr.		Xzavie Jackson	6-4 275 Sr.
RG	<b>Mike Cook</b>	6-2 315 Sr.	WLB	Van Alexander	6-0 230 So.
	Dain Wise	6-5 290 Fr.		Chad Washington	5-11 210 Fr.
RT	<b>Joel Clinger</b>	6-6 315 Sr.	MLB	<b>Dedrick Harrington</b>	6-4 240 Sr.
	Colin Brown	6-7 310 So.		Brock Christopher	6-2 240 So.
TE	<b>Martin Rucker</b>	6-5 245 Jr.	SLB	<b>Marcus Bacon</b>	6-2 225 Sr.
	Chase Coffman	6-6 230 So.		Steve Redmond	6-1 235 So.
WR	<b>Brad Ekwerekwu</b>	6-4 215 Sr.	CB	Domonique Johnson	6-2 190 So.
	Andrew Hoskins	6-3 210 Sr.		Hardy Ricks	5-11 190 Fr.
WR	Tommy Saunders	6-0 210 So.	SS	Brandon Massey	6-1 200 Sr.
	Jason Ray	6-1 210 Jr.		Travis Cardoza	5-11 200 Jr.
QB	Chase Daniel	6-1 220 So.	FS	<b>David Overstreet</b>	6-0 210 Sr.
	Brandon Coleman	6-4 215 Sr.		William Moore	6-2 215 So.
RB	<b>Marcus Woods</b>	5-8 195 Jr.	CB	Darnell Terrell	6-2 195 Jr.
	Tony Temple	5-9 190 Jr.		Trenita Washington	5-10 185 So.
PK	<b>Adam Crossett</b>	6-3 225 Jr.	P	<b>Adam Crossett</b>	6-3 225 Jr.

Returning starters in bold



# KANSAS JAYHAWKS

Sept. 30, Lincoln

**A**lthough Kansas is a combined 19-29 during his four seasons as head coach, the Jayhawks "certainly are getting better," Mark Mangino said following spring practice. "We're light years ahead of where we were when we started out in 2002, no question about that."

His assessment requires a context, considering the Jayhawks have had just one winning record in those four years. They beat Houston in the Fort Worth Bowl to finish 7-5 last season.

The bowl was their second under Mangino's direction. Never mind that they lost the Tangerine Bowl in 2003 to finish 6-7. Two bowl games in three seasons is "a sign of progress," he said.

When he replaced Terry Allen, Kansas had endured six consecutive losing seasons, its last success having come in the final season of the Big Eight Conference. So 2005 was cause for optimism, especially since it included the Jayhawks' first victory against Nebraska since 1968.

The question now is whether Kansas can sustain the perceived progress in the wake of significant losses on both sides of the ball — and particularly on defense. Plus, the Jayhawks will depend on young and inexperienced players, including redshirted freshman Kerry Meier at quarterback.

Meier emerged from spring practice atop the depth chart, pushing aside senior Adam Barmann, who started eight games before being sidelined by injury two seasons ago.

The 6-foot-3, 210-pound Meier "has intangibles that go with that position," Mangino said. "He's very intelligent. He's very poised. He's not rattled easily. He's kind of an even-keeled guy. It's tough to get under his skin. If he makes a bad play, he'll forget about it."

"You like a quarterback with a short memory."

You also like a quarterback with at least some experience.

But "Kerry, outright, won the job," said Mangino. "He earned it."

Meier will have some experience in front of him and running back Jon Cornish to whom he can hand or pitch the ball. But his receivers will be unproven, for the most part.

Cornish — whom Nebraska fans, no doubt, remember — was the team's leading rusher, with 780 yards and nine touchdowns, sharing carries with the departed Clark Green.

Cornish has the ability to be the Jayhawks' first 1,000-yard rusher since 1996. He "really is a dangerous guy carrying the ball, and he's learning to develop all the skills of a running back, blocking, pass catching and all those things that come with the position," Mangino said.

Linemen Bob Whitaker, David Ochoa and Cesar Rodriguez are among the returning starters on offense. The Jayhawks have lacked depth in the line, but that shouldn't be the case this season.

"We think we'll have a two-deep at most positions and maybe a swing guy," said Mangino. "We wanted to be a little bit

more physical. We've gotten bigger and stronger in the weight room."

Wide receiver Brian Murph is a returning starter, as is tight end Derek Fine. Murph was third on the team in receptions, with 33 for 368 yards and two touchdowns.

Kansas has ample room for improvement on offense, after finishing ninth in the Big 12 in total offense and 10th in scoring offense. The Jayhawks' success last season depended, in large part, on a veteran defense, which included Nick Reid, the conference defensive player of the year.

Jeff Jacobson/Kansas Athletics



Running back Jon Cornish had 780 yards and nine touchdowns, including a 72-yard run against Nebraska.



Reid, part of a linebacking corps that ranked with the Big 12's best, led the team in tackles, while Kevin Kane and Banks Floodman, the other starting linebackers, were second and third.

All three must be replaced, "a process that'll take time," Mangino said. "One of our linebackers that graduated, that started for three years, told me, 'Look, Coach, I think those kids behind us are better football players than us. They're better athletes.' But there's a learning curve involved."

Considering Kansas ranked 11th in the nation in total defense, and third against the run, the new linebackers have much to learn if the Jayhawks are to avoid a significant drop-off.

In addition to the departed linebackers and other seniors on defense, versatile Charles Gordon, who returned kicks and played wide receiver as well as cornerback, bypassed his final season of collegiate eligibility in favor of the NFL draft. Even so, "I feel really good about the direction of our defense," Mangino said, adding that it will be "probably the speediest defense we've had."

Cornerback Aqib Talib, safety Jerome Kemp and tackle James McClinton are the only returning starters on defense. Talib, a 6-2, 180-pound sophomore from Richardson, Texas, "has a chance to be

a pretty special player in this league," said Mangino.

The same is true of redshirted freshman Darrell Stuckey, according to Mangino. Stuckey climbed to the top of the depth chart at free safety during spring practice.

Stuckey and Meier were among eight redshirted freshmen who finished spring practice on the two-deeps, evidence of the inexperience on Mangino's fifth Kansas team.

Nevertheless, he is encouraged because "we've been able to recruit some kids that are very talented, that have now been able to step in and replace these veterans," he said.

The linebacking situation is an example. "Those guys had a lot of starts under their belts," Mangino said. Reid and Floodman were three-year starters, Kane a two-year starter.

"We went through a process where they had to learn and then they became very good players for us. We feel that's the case right now," he said. "We're not kind of holding it together with spit and putty, so to speak. We have solid football players that are stepping up for the kids that graduated."

That is light years away from where things were when he arrived.

"There's no question that we have made big strides in our program," said Mangino. ■



Jeff Jacobson/Kansas Athletics

Senior center David Ochoa is one of three returning starters on the offensive line.



## AT A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

A more physical offensive line, with depth, will be essential for a young quarterback, no matter how poised he might be. Plus, the running game could use more punch, which **Jon Cornish** has shown he can provide, given the opportunity an improved line offers.

#### QUESTION MARKS

The Jayhawks have plenty of question marks on both sides of the ball, including how the young players will react against Big 12 competition. Talent or not, the experience of the departed linebackers won't be easily replaced.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Cornish broke a 72-yard run — the Jayhawks' longest of the season — for a touchdown late in the third quarter of the Nebraska game, after NU had cut the deficit to 17-15. The senior from New Westminster, B.C., Canada, must develop the "total running back package," said coach **Mark Mangino**. "There is still a lot more involved than just running with the ball under your arm."

#### OH BROTHER

**Kerry Meier**, who had a heart abnormality corrected surgically last fall, is the younger brother of Kansas State quarterback Dylan Meier. Brothers Shad and Adam also played college football, Shad at Kansas State and Adam at Pittsburg State.

#### ALL GOOD THINGS

Mangino speaking after the Jayhawks ended their 36-game losing streak against Nebraska: "We needed to do something about this streak thing. It was starting to get on my nerves."

4<sup>th</sup>  
NORTH  
DIVISION

#### 2005 RECORD: 7-5 CONFERENCE FINISH: 5-3

S 3	Florida Atlantic	W, 30-19
S 10	Appalachian State	W, 36-8
S 17	Louisiana Tech	W, 34-14
O 1	@Texas Tech	L, 30-17
O 8	@Kansas State	L, 12-3
O 15	Oklahoma	L, 19-3
O 22	@Colorado	L, 44-13
O 29	Missouri	W, 13-3
N 5	Nebraska	W, 40-15
N 12	@Texas	L, 66-14
N 26	Iowa State	W, 24-21, ot
D 23	*vs. Houston	W, 42-13

\*Fort Worth Bowl, Fort Worth, Texas

### TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Dominic Roux	5-11 175 Sr.	DE	Paul Como	6-2 250 Sr.
	Dexton Fields	6-0 180 So.		Jeff Wheeler	6-7 250 Fr.
LT	<b>Cesar Rodriguez</b>	6-7 300 Jr.	DT	<b>James McClinton</b>	6-1 284 Jr.
	Travis Dambach	6-4 295 Sr.		Caleb Blakesley	6-5 285 Fr.
LG	Jake Cox	6-5 295 Sr.	NT	Wayne Wilder	6-3 310 Sr.
	<b>Bob Whitaker</b>	6-5 315 Sr.		Eric Butler	6-2 300 Jr.
C	<b>David Ochoa</b>	6-4 285 Sr.	DE	Rodney Allen	6-3 290 Sr.
	Matt Mann	6-4 290 Sr.		John McCoy	6-3 270 Sr.
RG	Ryan Cantrell	6-3 290 So.	LB	Eric Washington	6-2 225 Sr.
	Ramones Areso	6-4 300 Jr.		James Holt	6-3 200 So.
RT	Anthony Collins	6-6 310 So.	LB	Joe Mortensen	6-2 245 So.
	Jose Rodriguez	6-7 300 Jr.		Jake Schermer	6-2 220 Fr.
TE	<b>Derek Fine</b>	6-3 245 Jr.	LB	Mike Rivera	6-3 250 So.
	Marc Dierking	6-2 215 Jr.		Ian Hantishy	6-1 260 Fr.
WR	Marcus Herford	6-3 210 So.	CB	Blake Buettel	6-1 175 Jr.
	Dominic Roux	5-11 175 Sr.		Michael McCoy	5-11 185 Jr.
WR	<b>Brian Murphy</b>	6-1 190 Sr.	S	<b>Jerome Kemp</b>	5-10 200 Sr.
	Marcus Henry	6-4 200 Jr.		Olaitan Oguntodu	6-0 200 Fr.
QB	Kerry Meier	6-3 220 Fr.	S	Darrell Stuckey	6-1 185 Fr.
	Adam Barmann	6-4 210 Sr.		Tang Bachevie	6-1 195 So.
RB	<b>Jon Cornish</b>	6-0 210 Sr.	CB	<b>Aqib Talib</b>	6-2 190 So.
	Angus Quigley	6-2 210 Fr.		Raymond Brown	6-3 200 So.
K	<b>Scott Webb</b>	5-11 180 Jr.	P	<b>Kyle Tucker</b>	6-2 210 Jr.

Returning starters in bold



# COLORADO BUFFALOES

Nov. 24, Lincoln

**W**hen Colorado's spring football practice was interrupted for a week by the university's spring break, Dan Hawkins hunkered down in his office to study videotape and plan for the remaining practices, right? That's what head coaches do, particularly new ones facing formidable challenges.

And given the program's well-publicized, off-the-field problems, Hawkins faces a formidable challenge in replacing a fired Gary Barnett. There's no question about that.

But Hawkins didn't hunker down during the break. He jumped from a plane at 10,000 feet.

He and daughters Ashley and Brittany shared a skydiving experience, something he had never done and might not do again. Even if he did, "I wouldn't make a hobby of it," he said.

As the skydiving illustrates, the 45-year-old Hawkins doesn't always follow convention, a fact further in evidence with the way some of the Buffaloes' spring practices concluded.

After one, Hawkins broke out golf clubs and balls for a chipping competition in which players chipped toward a teammate in an orange jersey, about half a football field away.

The defense won the chipping competition, by the way.

After another, the skill-position players — Hawkins calls them the "little guys" so as not to insult the linemen, whom he calls the "big guys" — went against each other in a goal-line drill.

Senior J.J. Billingsley, a 5-11, 185-pound free safety, lined up at center.

And after yet another, players competed by sliding on their stomachs in the snow.

Such activities were intended to alleviate the "grind" of practice, according to Hawkins. That he is unorthodox in his approach also is apparent by his willingness to refer

to his predecessor, the deposed Barnett, and in a positive way. He attributed the team's buy-in to the new system during the spring, "a lot of it," to Barnett, "how he ran things and the quality of kids" he recruited.

"I think they all miss Gary and his staff, and I think they all were coached up and mature enough to understand the process," said Hawkins. "Trust is something that takes place over time. But to the degree that they

could do it, our guys just jumped right in from day one and never said, 'Hey, this is how we did that.' Or 'We don't like that.' Or 'We used to do it this way.'

"They just do it how we want to do it, and that has been great."

How Hawkins and his staff, which includes carryovers Brian Cabral and Darian Hagan, want to do things is different, particularly on offense. They will spread the field and, well, do whatever they can. To corrupt an Al Davis expression, they have implemented a "just score, baby" offense.

"I don't think we're so confined by a certain set of rules that we can't do some things that accentuate guys' abilities," Hawkins said when asked if his system could be molded to players.

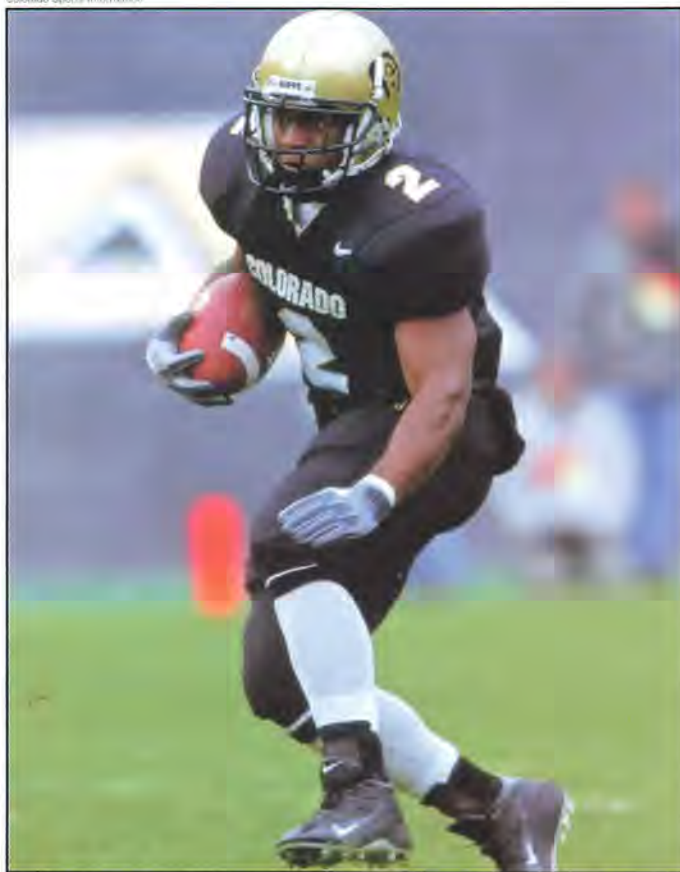
Whatever the offensive system is called, it has

proven to be productive. His record in five seasons at Boise State was 53-11. And his last four teams ranked in the top 10 nationally in scoring, on the way to winning four consecutive Western Athletic Conference championships.

Defensively, his teams attacked from a 4-3 base alignment — with an emphasis on attack. And defensive coordinator Ron Collins came with him from Boise State.

Barnett, who got a \$3 million contract buyout, didn't leave the program devoid of talent. Even though the

Colorado Sports Information



Tailback Hugh Charles rushed for 858 yards and six touchdowns as a sophomore.



Buffaloes lost their final four games in 2005, by a combined score of 149-32, they finished atop the Big 12's North Division for the fourth time in five seasons.

Colorado is most experienced on defense, with Billingsley, inside linebackers Thaddeus Washington and Jordan Dizon and end Abraham Wright among eight returning starters. The Buffaloes also have the nation's best place-kicker in All-American Mason Crosby.

Hawkins has indicated a willingness to allow Crosby to attempt a field goal of 70 yards this season. The NCAA Division I-A record, without the use of a tee, is 65 yards, set by Kansas State's Martin Gramatica against Northern

Illinois in 1998. The overall record is 67 yards, shared by Texas's Russell Erxleben (1977), Arkansas's Steve Little (1977) and Wichita State's Joe Williams (1978).

Most prominent of the returning starters on offense are senior linemen Mark Fenton and Brian Daniels and junior tailback Hugh Charles, who rushed for 858 yards and six touchdowns last season.

With senior James Cox hampered by injury, the competition at quarterback was "kind of a two-horse race" during the spring, between juniors Bernard Jackson and

**Mason Crosby became the first kicker in CU history to earn first-team All-America honors.**

Brian White.

White's strength is passing. Jackson "has a very good arm as well," Hawkins said. "But he also has some talented legs, so it's a little easier for him when things break down to be productive."

Both did a "nice job within their own styles over the spring," said Hawkins.

The spring game featured only two offensive touchdowns, the first by wide receiver Stephone Robinson on a reverse and the second on the final play of the scrimmage.

A key to the offense is the play of the linemen. "It's hard to say, specifically, where they're going to be, but I know we made huge strides in that last week (of spring)," Hawkins said. "I really felt that we jumped up, and I think if we can continue to do that, we're going to be a good football team."

He jumped in the spring, too, but out rather than up. Before the first practice after the team returned from spring break, he showed video of his skydiving jump. He was apprehensive about the jump, he told his players, but through visualization, he was able to "get his mind right."

There was a lesson to be learned from his experience, even though "I don't think it's something I aspire to do every day," he said. "That was kind of a gut-check right there as it was." ■



Colorado Sports Information



## AT A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

**Dan Hawkins'** enthusiasm and willingness to acknowledge **Gary Barnett** have made the transition easier. With **Mason Crosby**, if Colorado can get near mid-field, it is in scoring range.

#### QUESTION MARKS

The most significant question is how quickly the players can adjust to change. The learning curve "has been steep in all three phases," Hawkins said at the end of spring practice. "We're a long ways away execution-wise from where we want to be, but I like their attitude right now. But we've got a lot of work for our guys to get done over the summer and then in fall camp to get ready." Regardless of who emerges, the Buffaloes will be inexperienced at quarterback, and though experienced, their defense lacks size up front.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Every position was open going into spring practice, except place-kicker. That job belongs to Crosby, a returning consensus All-American who was 21-of-28 on field goal attempts and 32-of-32 on extra-point kicks. During his stellar career, Crosby has made 12-of-13 fourth-quarter field goals, including 10-of-10 in the final 8 1/2 minutes, with eight of the 10 from 41 yards or longer.

#### PENALTY PRONE

Colorado and Texas Tech were the most penalized teams in the Big 12 last season, both averaging 83.4 yards per game. The Buffaloes were penalized the most, 123 times to Texas Tech's 113. But they played one more game than the Red Raiders.

**5<sup>th</sup>**  
**NORTH**  
**DIVISION**

#### 2005 RECORD: 7-6

#### CONFERENCE FINISH: 5-3

S 3	Colorado State	W, 31-28
S 10	New Mexico State	W, 39-0
S 24	@Miami	L, 23-3
O 1	@Oklahoma State	W, 34-0
O 8	Texas A&M	W, 41-20
O 15	@Texas	L, 42-17
O 22	Kansas	W, 44-13
O 29	@Kansas State	W, 23-20
N 5	Missouri	W, 41-12
N 12	@Iowa State	L, 30-16
N 25	Nebraska	L, 30-3
N 3	*vs. Texas	L, 70-3
D 27	**vs. Clemson	L, 19-10

\*Big 12 Championship, Houston, Texas  
\*\*Champs Sports Bowl, Orlando, Fla.

### TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

XWR Patrick Williams	6-2 195 So.	LE Walter Boye-Doe	6-2 245 Sr.
Alvin Barnett	6-0 195 Jr.	<b>Maurice Lucas</b>	6-4 240 So.
ZWR <b>Dusty Sprague</b>	6-4 190 Jr.	DT George Hypolite	6-2 265 So.
Stephone Robinson	5-9 185 Jr.	Taj Kaynor	6-5 250 Fr.
LT <b>Edwin Harrison</b>	6-4 300 Jr.	NT Brandon Nicolas	6-3 270 So.
Devin Head	6-4 275 Fr.	Marcus Jones	6-4 295 Sr.
LG <b>Brian Daniels</b>	6-4 300 Sr.	RE <b>Abraham Wright</b>	6-3 240 Sr.
Bryce MacMartin	6-2 290 Sr.	<b>Maurice Lucas</b>	6-4 240 So.
C <b>Mark Fenton</b>	6-4 295 Sr.	MLB <b>Thad. Washington</b>	5-11 240 Sr.
Zach Jones	6-3 270 Fr.	R.J. Brown	6-1 225 So.
RG Daniel Sanders	6-3 300 So.	WLB <b>Jordan Dizon</b>	6-0 220 Jr.
Tom Grubin	6-0 285 Fr.	Marcus Burton	6-0 230 So.
RT Paul Backowski	6-6 285 Fr.	SLB Brad Jones	6-4 220 So.
Jeremy Hauck	6-4 275 Fr.	Joe Sanders	6-3 220 Jr.
TE Paul Creighton	6-5 245 Sr.	LCB Terrence Wheatley	5-10 175 Jr.
Tyson DeVree	6-6 245 Jr.	Terry Washington	5-10 195 Sr.
QB Bernard Jackson	6-0 195 Jr.	FS <b>J.J. Billingsley</b>	5-11 185 Sr.
Brian White	6-5 225 Jr.	<b>Lorenzo Sims</b>	5-11 185 Sr.
TB <b>Hugh Charles</b>	5-8 185 Jr.	SS Ryan Walters	5-11 200 So.
Mell Holliday	5-8 205 Sr.	<b>Tyrone Henderson</b>	5-10 180 Sr.
FB Samson Jagoras	5-10 225 Jr.	RCB <b>Garrett Burl</b>	5-10 160 Sr.
Jake Behrens	5-11 235 Fr.	Gardner McKay	5-11 160 So.
PK <b>Mason Crosby</b>	6-2 210 Sr.	P <b>Mason Crosby</b>	6-2 210 Sr.

Returning starters in bold



# KANSAS STATE WILDCATS

Oct. 14, Manhattan, Kan.

**W**hen Jordan Congdon's kick sailed through the goal posts from 40 yards out with 1:05 remaining against Kansas State last season, it ensured Nebraska of a winning record and a bowl bid.

It also ensured Kansas State of a second consecutive losing record, and in so doing, might have solidified Bill Snyder's decision to step aside after 17 years as the Wildcats' coach.

Such a scenario is overly simple, not to mention speculative. But perhaps Snyder would have stayed a little longer if Congdon's field goal attempt had failed. It's not so far fetched.

In any case, three days after the game, Snyder announced his decision. And three weeks after that, athletic director Tim Weiser introduced Ron Prince as Snyder's successor.

Prince's hiring was as much of a surprise as Snyder's in 1989. Prince had never been a head coach, at any level. Now, at age 36, he is the second youngest in NCAA Division I-A football.

He also is just the fifth black head football coach in Division I-A. When asked what that was like, he said he had no basis for comparison because "I've never been any other kind."

He hoped purple would be the only color that mattered, he added.

Making purple matter again in the Big 12 North will be no small task. Snyder set a lofty standard for a program that was the nation's only one at the major college level with 500 all-time losses when he arrived from Iowa, where he was an assistant under Hayden Fry.

From a beginning that couldn't even be called humble, the program gained prominence under Snyder, an eight-time conference coach of the year and three-time national coach of the year. His teams were a combined 136-68-1, with a Big 12 title in 2003, four divisional titles and 11

bowl games.

Prince will be constantly reminded of those accomplishments, of course, if for no other reason than the Wildcats play at 50,000-seat Bill Snyder Family Stadium. Their struggles the past two seasons were reflected in declining attendance. The final game there in 2005 drew 46,000.

The changes have renewed enthusiasm. Prince's first Spring Game drew 31,875.

Prince was born in Omaha, Neb., and grew up about 20 miles from the Kansas State campus in Junction City. So he started thinking about the job "when I was 3 or 4," he said.

His coaching background, like Snyder's, is offense. He was Virginia's offensive coordinator the past three years, as well as the Cavaliers' offensive line coach for five years. His coaching career began as a volunteer at Dodge City (Kan.) Community College, where he played before transferring to Appalachian State, and included stops at Alabama A&M, South Carolina State, James Madison and Cornell.

He inherited a team with 17 returning starters, but "we really tried to start from scratch, trying to implement our systems by evaluating the off-season conditioning programs and just trying to assess the talent of the individual players and where they might

fit best within our system," he said.

"We haven't taken too much time to go back at all to evaluate where they have played in years past. We tried to start fresh and make sure we have a competitive tension, a competitive environment among the players returning. We want every player to feel like he can compete for playing time."

To illustrate, sophomore Allen Evridge started the final six games at quarterback last season and set school position records for a freshman, passing for 1,365 yards

Kansas State Sports Information



Senior strongside linebacker Brandon Archer has been Kansas State's leading tackler the past two seasons.



and six touchdowns and rushing for 203 yards and four touchdowns. But he competed with four others in the spring.

The four included seniors Dylan Meier and Allen Webb as well as redshirted freshman Kevin Lopina and true freshman Josh Freeman — who backed out of an oral commitment to Nebraska. Meier, who missed all of last season because of injury, and Webb both have been starters.

Prince wouldn't identify a favorite for the job when asked during the Big 12 coaches' post-spring teleconference. The Wildcats had yet to play their Spring Game at that point.

Even so, was one of the five ahead of the others? "I think all the quarterbacks here are talented," he replied. "We're just going to see which one can lead his team the best."

The competition there will continue in fall camp.

Whoever emerges at quarterback will have some proven receivers to whom he can throw. Jordy Nelson was the leading receiver last season, with 45 catches for 669 yards and eight touchdowns, while Jermaine Moreira was the leading receiver two seasons ago.

The team's leading rusher, Thomas Clayton, also is back, as is Greg Wafford, who was picked by the coaching staff as a co-most valuable offensive lineman.

The defense will be built around strongside linebacker Brandon Archer, the leading tackler the past two seasons, and free safety Marcus Watts, the second-leading tackler in 2005.

Prince's coordinators, James Franklin (offense) and Raheem Morris (defense), are even younger than he is. They all face a task made more difficult by Snyder's legendary status.

"Most people think that coaching is demanding performance, having players buy in," said Prince, who will turn 37 two days after the fourth game of the season against Marshall.

"I think the first part of that is making a connection with the player. The player has to understand very clearly what's important to you, what your values are, where you're coming from, so to speak, and then the coach has to be able to understand what's important to that player and what his goals and objectives are as well. After that I think you can teach, very specifically, what you're looking for.

"Then you can demand performance, and then you can evaluate whether a particular player has bought in. So I think there's a process you go through. Obviously, it's not in 90 days. It's not in 100 days. It takes longer than that. And I think we're well on our way through that process." ■



Jordy Nelson was K-SU's leading receiver, with 45 catches for 669 yards and eight touchdowns.



## AT A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

The Wildcats aren't likely to lack enthusiasm with such a young coaching staff. And they have some experienced receivers, although they threw the fewest passes in the Big 12 last season.

#### QUESTION MARKS

Kansas State was mistake-prone in 2005, a problem that could have been attributed to youth and inexperience. In any case, there's plenty of room for improvement, across the board. Also, as coach **Ron Prince** points out, the transition from the **Bill Snyder** era will take some time. The question is, how patient can fans be after the heady success Snyder brought to Manhattan.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Among the problems in Snyder's final season was that the Wildcats didn't have a difference-maker on either side of the ball. They had only one player among 60 selected to the Big 12 coaches' first and second all-conference teams — offensive lineman **Jeromey Clary**, a second-team choice. And he's gone. **Jordy Nelson** was a reliable wide receiver, after moving from the secondary. The 6-foot-3, 210-pound junior finished in the top 10 in the conference in receptions and receiving yards.

#### NOT NEARLY ENOUGH

Only four other NCAA Division I-A football coaches (out of 119) are black: former Cornhusker Turner Gill at Buffalo, Karl Dorrell at UCLA, Tyrone Willingham at Washington and Sylvester Croom at Mississippi State.

#### JUCOS

Sound familiar? Prince's first recruiting class included 11 junior college transfers.

6<sup>th</sup>  
NORTH  
DIVISION

#### 2005 RECORD: 5-6 CONFERENCE FINISH: 2-6

S 3	Fla. International	W, 35-21
S 10	@Marshall	W, 21-19
S 24	North Texas	W, 54-7
O 1	@Oklahoma	L, 43-21
O 8	Kansas	W, 12-3
O 15	@Texas Tech	L, 59-20
O 22	Texas A&M	L, 30-28
O 29	Colorado	L, 23-20
N 5	@Iowa State	L, 45-17
N 12	@Nebraska	L, 27-25
N 19	@Missouri	W, 36-28

### TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	<b>Yamon Figurs</b>	6-0 180 Sr.	LE	<b>Blake Seiler</b>	6-3 240 Sr.
	Jermaine Moreira	5-11 190 Sr.		Steve Burch	6-2 275 Sr.
LT	Gerard Spexrath	6-7 290 So.	DT	<b>Alphonso Moran</b>	6-1 290 So.
	Logan Robinson	6-9 310 Jr.		Derek Marso	6-3 295 Sr.
LG	<b>John Hafferty</b>	6-3 305 Jr.	NT	<b>Quintin Echols</b>	6-2 300 Sr.
	Derek Meyer	6-6 290 Fr.		Steven Cline	6-3 285 Jr.
C	<b>Jordan Bedore</b>	6-3 280 So.	RE	Tearrius George	6-4 250 Sr.
	Jacob Voegell	6-2 276 Jr.		Ian Campbell	6-4 240 So.
RG	<b>Caleb Handy</b>	6-1 305 So.	LB	<b>Brandon Archer</b>	6-2 225 Sr.
	Matt Boss	6-4 310 So.		Matt Butler	6-2 235 Sr.
RT	<b>Greg Wafford</b>	6-2 315 Sr.	LB	<b>Maurice Mack</b>	6-0 216 Sr.
	Brad Rooker	6-6 260 So.		Reggie Walker	6-2 220 So.
TE	<b>Rashaad Norwood</b>	6-5 230 Jr.	LB	Ted Sims	6-1 235 Sr.
	Brett Alstalt	6-5 230 So.		Zach Diles	6-2 230 Sr.
WR	<b>Jordy Nelson</b>	6-3 210 Jr.	CB	Justin McKinney	5-10 180 Jr.
	Toney Coleman	6-2 190 Jr.		Maurice Porter	6-1 185 Sr.
WR	Davin Dennis	6-1 180 Sr.	S	Maurice Porter	6-1 185 Sr.
	Casey Hausman	6-2 180 Jr.		Kyle Williams	6-1 195 Sr.
QB	<b>Allan Evridge</b>	6-1 210 So.	S	<b>Marcus Watts</b>	6-2 180 Jr.
	Allen Webb	6-3 205 Sr.		Jesse Tutuan	6-0 200 Sr.
RB	Carlos Alsop	6-1 210 Sr.	CB	<b>Bryan Baldwin</b>	5-11 185 Jr.
	<b>Thomas Clayton</b>	6-0 225 Sr.		Justin McKinney	5-10 180 Jr.
PK	<b>Jeff Snodgrass</b>	6-2 200 Sr.	P	<b>Tim Reyer</b>	6-0 210 Jr.

Returning starters in bold



# OKLAHOMA SOONERS

**M**ost programs would be pleased with an eight-win season. Most programs aren't Oklahoma.

An example of that came this spring, when Oklahoma's spring game was nationally televised by ESPN.

In what was expected to be a rebuilding year, the Sooners struggled out of the gate in 2005, dropping three of their first five contests. Head coach Bob Stoops, in what was arguably his best coaching job since he arrived at Oklahoma eight years ago, kept his players on course throughout the rocky start and guided them to a record of 8-4 and a Holiday Bowl win against Oregon.

After a season-opening loss to TCU, Stoops made the decision to hand the starting quarterback job to highly-touted redshirt freshman Rhett Bomar. The move forced Paul Thompson into a backup role and eventually a position switch to receiver. Although Bomar was forced to learn on the job, he learned what it took to be a leader and rallied his team to a strong finish despite not having a healthy Adrian Peterson in the backfield for the entire season.

Bomar enters his sophomore season firmly entrenched as the starter and will only get better as he gains more experience. Having Peterson in the lineup won't hurt.

After a record-setting freshman campaign in 2004, Peterson was hobbled by an ankle injury that forced him to the sidelines for all or parts of four games. He still managed to lead all Big 12 running backs with 1,108 yards, including a scintillating 24-carry, 237-yard performance against Oklahoma State. Still one of college football's greatest talents, Peterson will enter the season as one of the clear favorites to win the Heisman Trophy.

Unfortunately for Peterson, the Sooners will be working with a retooled offensive line that returns only one

starter in senior right tackle Chris Messner. Not only is Messner the only returning starter up front, but he is also the only returning senior. Sophomore guard J.D. Quinn, who started four games last year, had a solid spring and could see time at either guard or center. Three other sophomores who are expected to compete for starting jobs are Brannan Braxton, Jon Cooper and George Robinson. While Stoops was concerned about the lack of experience on the offensive line, he was pleased with what he saw during the spring.

"We were concerned about our offensive line, but the guys who were in there in the winter weight workouts and spring practice got essentially a second spring with all the reps they had," Stoops said. "We have a chance to be pretty good in the offensive line."

If the line can do its job and give Bomar time to throw, the Oklahoma offense will have a chance to be as balanced as any in the Big 12. Part of the reason is a talented trio of young receivers that, like their quarterback, received early playing time as freshmen in 2005. Malcolm Kelly, the team's leading receiver a year ago with 33 catches and 471 yards, Juakin Iglesias and Manuel Johnson all have the potential to be All-Big 12 performers by the time their careers are complete.

One player who did become a first-team All-Big 12 player was fullback J.D.

Runnels, who completed his eligibility last fall. The Oklahoma passing game is heavily reliant upon the fullback as both a pass protector and receiver out of the backfield. Runnels became one of the nation's top fullbacks because of his versatility, and replacing him will not be an easy chore. The top candidates to start at fullback, junior Dane Zaslav and sophomore Matt Clapp, are both unproven.

With several gaps to fill on offense, the Sooners are for-



**Tailback Adrian Peterson** rushed for 1,108 yards, despite missing considerable time with an ankle injury.



tunate not to have the same issues on the opposite side of the ball. Oklahoma had the 13th-best defense in the nation and stiffened significantly when conference play began. No Big 12 team played better defense during conference games as the Sooners allowed just 291 yards while registering 35 sacks in eight conference games.

Several key players who were a part of that resurgence are back, including senior linebacker Rufus Alexander. A first-team All-Big 12 pick last season, Alexander led the team with 102 tackles and nine quarterback hurries and will be a serious contender for the Butkus Award.



**Butkus Award candidate Rufus Alexander led the Sooners with 102 tackles.**

There are also several candidates for postseason honors on the defensive line, which is stocked with talent. Senior ends C.J. Ah You and Calvin Thibodeaux anchor a front four that will put a tremendous amount of pressure on opposing quarterbacks. Ah You and Thibodeaux combined for 16 sacks and will be supported by the return of senior Larry Birdine from a torn biceps injury that forced him to miss the 2005 season. In the middle, junior Carl Pendleton returns along with a bevy of blue-chip prospects.

Among the young crop of tackles is redshirt freshman DeMarcus Granger, one of the top defensive tackle prospects coming out of high school that should see significant time on the field this year. Another possibility is true freshman Gerald McCoy, a 6-4, 305-pounder from Oklahoma City who was named as National Defensive Player of the Year by USA Today.

"The defensive line has a chance to be really special," Stoops said. "C.J. Ah You is one of the best pass rushers in the conference."

With Ah You and company forcing the issue up front, Oklahoma's young secondary will have many opportunities to make plays. Sophomore Reggie Smith started the final nine games at strong safety as a true freshman, before moving to cornerback in the spring. The other corner spot belongs to junior D.J. Wolf. Junior Marcus Walker, the most experienced of the returning corners, had surgery this spring and remains a question mark for the fall. Junior Darien Williams and sophomore Nic Harris will battle for the free safety job.

There is not a question mark at kicker, where junior Garrett Hartley has a strong, accurate leg. He demonstrated his ability when he drilled by 52-yard field goal against Texas, the longest kick in the 100-year history of the rivalry.

Oklahoma should improve upon its record of a year ago, which will please the denizens of the Sooner Nation. Whether it get back to being a national championship caliber program remains to be seen, but with Stoops at the controls, anything is possible. ■ — *By Shawn Heilbron*



## At A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

As long as **Adrian Peterson** is in the backfield, the running back position is strong. The defensive line is also loaded with high-impact players who can get to the quarterback in a hurry.

#### QUESTION MARKS

The offensive line is a concern, especially with a new fullback. Oklahoma needs to find some capable replacements who can provide adequate protection for **Rhett Bomar**. Cornerback could also be a problem area if **Marcus Walker** is unable to regain his form after off-season surgery.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

It may sound obvious, but Peterson is a one-man wrecking ball who can obliterate would-be tacklers. With Bomar's continued development, teams won't be able to stack the box against the Sooners, which will open up room for Peterson to break loose.

#### SIGHTS ON SIMS

With 3,033 career rushing yards, Peterson is on pace to surpass **Billy Sims** as the school's all-time leader. The junior needs just 1,086 yards to pass Sims, who accumulated 4,118 yards. Peterson's two-year total is the best in school history.

#### BALANCING ACT

Oklahoma passed for 2,131 yards and rushed for 2,130 last season, nearly achieving perfect balance on offense. That represented the best balance during **Bob Stoops'** tenure since his 2002 team had 2,828 yards passing and 2,668 yards rushing.

# 1st

## SOUTH DIVISION

### 2005 RECORD: 8-4 CONFERENCE FINISH: 6-2

S 3	TCU	L, 17-10
S 10	Tulsa	W, 31-15
S 17	@UCLA	L, 41-24
O 1	Kansas State	W, 43-21
O 8	Texas (Dallas)	L, 45-12
O 15	Kansas (K.C.)	W, 19-3
O 22	Baylor	W, 37-30 (ot)
O 29	@Nebraska	W, 31-24
N 12	Texas A&M	W, 36-30
N 19	@Texas Tech	L, 23-21
N 26	Oklahoma State	W, 43-14
D 29	*vs. Oregon	W, 17-14

\*Holiday Bowl, San Diego, Calif.

## TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	<b>Malcolm Kelly</b>	6-4 204 So.	DE	<b>Calvin Thibodeaux</b>	6-1 251 Sr.
	Quentin Chaney	6-5 208 So.		Alonzo Dotson	6-4 252 Jr.
LT	<b>Chris Messner</b>	6-6 280 Sr.	DT	<b>Carl Pendleton</b>	6-5 277 Jr.
	George Robinson	6-5 332 So.		Steven Coleman	6-4 310 Jr.
LG	George Robinson	6-5 332 So.	DT	Cory Bennett	6-2 275 So.
	Sherrane Moore	6-4 300 Jr.		Cordero Moore	6-3 297 Fr.
C	Jon Cooper	6-2 278 So.	DE	<b>C.J. Ah You</b>	6-4 272 Sr.
	Cameron Schacht	6-4 255 So.		Larry Birdine	6-3 258 Sr.
RG	J.D. Quinn	6-3 305 So.	SLB	Demarrio Pleasant	6-2 235 Jr.
	Brian Simmons	6-4 275 Fr.		Ryan Reynolds	6-2 230 So.
RT	Brannndon Braxton	6-6 318 So.	MLB	<b>Zach Latimer</b>	6-2 220 Sr.
	<b>Chris Messner</b>	6-6 280 Sr.		Curtis Lofton	6-1 238 So.
TE	Joe Jon Finley	6-6 244 So.	WLB	<b>Rufus Alexander</b>	6-1 231 Sr.
	Brody Eldridge	6-5 248 Fr.		<b>Lewis Baker</b>	6-2 210 So.
WR	Paul Thompson	6-4 210 Sr.	CB	<b>Reggie Smith</b>	6-1 199 So.
	Fred Strong	6-1 202 So.		Brett Bowers	5-11 194 So.
QB	<b>Rhett Bomar</b>	6-2 215 So.	SS	Jason Carter	5-10 199 Sr.
	Joey Halzle	6-4 201 So.		Keenan Clayton	6-2 216 Fr.
RB	<b>Adrian Peterson</b>	6-2 218 Jr.	FS	Darien Williams	5-10 197 So.
	DeMarco Murray	6-0 183 Fr.		Nic Harris	6-3 218 So.
FB	Dane Zaslav	6-0 242 Jr.	CB	<b>D.J. Wolfe</b>	5-11 196 Jr.
	Matt Clapp	6-2 242 So.		Lendy Holmes	6-0 196 So.
PK	<b>Garrett Hartley</b>	5-9 182 So.	P	Mike Knall	5-10 175 Jr.

Returning starters in bold



# TEXAS LONGHORNS

Oct. 21, Lincoln

**F**or Colt McCoy and Jevan Snead, the eyes of Texas truly are upon them.

The two freshmen quarterbacks are charged with filling one enormous void after the departure of Vince Young, who left Texas in a blaze of glory after leading the Longhorns to their first national championship since 1970.

Young capped off a remarkable college career by turning the Rose Bowl into his own personal highlight reel. His one-man show featured 276 yards passing, 200 yards rushing and three touchdowns, including the game-winner with 19 seconds left. The dynamic performance set off a seismic effect that, after initially maintaining his desire to return to Texas for his senior season, saw him opt to take his tantalizing skills to the NFL.

For Texas and head coach Mack Brown, losing Young is a crushing blow to a program that appeared poised to make a run at a second straight title. Brown knows that he will have to be patient as both McCoy and Snead, who spent the spring jockeying for position atop the depth chart, learn how to manage the offense — as well as the expectations that come with playing quarterback at Texas.

"Right now, we plan on playing both our young quarterbacks because we don't have anyone with any experience," Brown said. "We know we might struggle some there early, but we have to get both of them some snaps."

The "experienced" of the duo is McCoy, who spent his redshirt season patrolling the sidelines as the third-team quarterback behind Young and Matt Nordgren. Snead was among the nation's most highly recruited signal-callers who, after withdrawing his initial commitment to Florida, enrolled early at Texas so that he could go through spring practice and compete for the starting job. True freshman Sherrod Harris could also factor into the mix when he arrives on campus this fall, but for now it is clearly a two-

man race heading into the season. Despite the fact that McCoy and Snead are battling for the same job, the two have quickly developed a bond off of the field.

"On the field there is a lot of competition," Snead said. "Off the field, we're really good friends. We push each other, and that's what's so great about it. We just make each other work harder."

With such an abundance of talent on both sides of the ball, Texas should be able to ease its young quarterbacks

into their roles by calling upon them to manage games rather than win them. If the Longhorns need a big play, there are plenty of other players Brown can turn to for that.

The only thing that got in the way of running back Jamaal Charles last season en route to being named Big 12 Offensive Freshman of the Year was his ankle. The injury, which forced him to miss parts of three games, was the only blemish on a sparkling season that saw Charles run for 878 yards and 11 touchdowns. His average of 7.4 yards per carry was the third-highest in the country. If he can remain healthy, the shifty Charles could become a 2,000-yard runner.

Although Charles is the lead horse, Texas has a very crowded stable of thoroughbred running backs. Fifth-year senior Selvin Young and junior Ramonce Taylor ran for 1,048 yards and 20 touchdowns between them last year.

Despite battling injury issues over the past two seasons, Young can be a difference-maker in the backfield and in the return game when he's at full speed. Taylor, whose status on the team is in jeopardy after encountering some legal issues during the spring, is a dual threat who started at both wide receiver and running back last season.

The Texas runners will operate behind a very experienced offensive line that, despite the loss of two starters, will use several players as part of its rotation. Anchoring the line will be a trio of seniors. Center Lyle Sendlein, guard Kasey Studdard and tackle Justin Blalock have 76



Justin Blalock, a senior who has started all 38 games at right tackle, is a candidate for the Outland Trophy.



career starts among them. Sophomore Cedric Dockery, whose brother Derrick was a Texas All-American and is now with the Washington Redskins, appears poised to step in at the vacant guard spot while redshirt freshmen Chris Hall and Adam Ulatoski are the prime contenders at tackle.

The receiving corps, a perceived weakness prior to last season, turned out to be much better than expected. The emergence of juniors Billy Pittman and Limas Sweed will aid the development of the young quarterbacks. At 6-foot-5, Sweed is a huge target who can create space against smaller defenders. Pittman, who averaged 22.1 yards per reception in 2005, gives Texas the ability to stretch the field.

The graduation of last season's leading receiver, David Thomas, clears the way for talented redshirt freshman Jermichael Finley to crack the lineup. Finley was very impressive during the spring and will be one of the Big 12's impact freshmen in 2006.



Running back Jamaal Charles had one of the most productive freshman seasons in UT history.

Two other freshmen who should receive significant playing time are linebackers Sergio Kindle and Rodrick Muckelroy. Kindle was one of the nation's top two-way players as a high school senior in Dallas while Muckelroy sat out last season as a redshirt. Junior Scott Derry and sophomore Jeremy Campbell will join the youngsters to provide solid depth behind returning starters Rashad Bobino and Robert Killebrew. A junior, Killebrew enjoyed a breakout year, collecting 77 tackles, four sacks and

team-leading 11 quarterback hurries.

The secondary lost two key players in Thorpe Award winner Michael Huff and Cedric Griffin. To compensate for Huff's absence, senior Michael Griffin (no relation to Cedric) will move to strong safety. That move will allow Michael's twin brother, Marcus, to slide into the starting lineup at weak safety.

The strength of the defense is up front, where three starters return from a fearsome quartet. Senior ends Tim Crowder and Brian Robison are high-energy performers who have a nose for the ball. Robison has a blue-collar work ethic and led the team with 13 tackles for loss a year ago. Junior Frank Okam is slated at one tackle spot and will be joined by either junior Derek Lokey or sophomore Roy Miller.

When your program is coming off a season in which it led the conference in virtually every major offensive and defensive category, it would figure that the primary concern is in the kicking game. Senior Greg Johnson is the favorite to replace David Pino at kicker, while freshman Trevor Gerland could win the punting job.

There is no question that the Longhorns are locked and loaded as they mount the defense of their national title. In order for them to have a realistic chance to repeat, they will need one — if not all — of their freshman quarterbacks to rise to the occasion. ■ — *By Shawn Heilbron*



## At A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

The Longhorns are strong at virtually every position, but particularly at running back. Anytime you have three players on your roster such as Texas has with the skills and speed of **Jamaal Charles** and **Selvin Young**, it is a luxury.

#### QUESTION MARKS

There is no question that **Mack Brown's** chief concerns are at quarterback and kicker. Both of those positions feature unproven players who will have to come through in pressure situations throughout the season.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

**Jamaal Charles** is a rare breed in that he is as fearless as he is elusive. The sophomore runner has a style similar to Barry Sanders in that he is a threat to score every time he touches the ball.

#### LONGHORNS IN HD

Texas will install the largest high-definition video display in collegiate sports for Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium. The multi-million dollar display and control system will be installed and operational for the 2006 season opener against North Texas on Sept. 2.

#### BROWN IN DEMAND

Winning a national championship can make a head coach extremely popular. On April 3, Brown threw out the first pitch at the season-opening game for the Texas Rangers. He followed that appearance by waving the green flag at Texas Motor Speedway to signal the start of the Nextel Cup race held there on April 9.

# 2<sup>nd</sup>

**SOUTH DIVISION**

#### 2005 RECORD: 13-0 CONFERENCE FINISH: 8-0

S 3	Louisiana-Lafayette	W, 60-3
S 10	@Ohio State	W, 25-22
S 17	Rice	W, 51-10
O 1	@Missouri	W, 51-20
O 8	Oklahoma (Dallas)	W, 45-12
O 15	Colorado	W, 42-17
O 22	Texas Tech	W, 52-17
O 29	@Oklahoma State	W, 47-28
N 5	@Baylor	W, 62-0
N 12	Kansas	W, 66-14
N 25	@Texas A&M	W, 40-29
D 3	vs. Colorado*	W, 70-3
J 4	vs. USC**	W, 41-38

\*Big 12 Championship, Houston, Texas.  
\*\*Rose Bowl, Pasadena, Calif.

## TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE <b>Limas Sweed</b>	6-5 219 Jr.	DE <b>Tim Crowder</b>	6-4 270 Sr.
Myron Hardy	6-2 210 So.	Eddie Jones	6-3 240 Fr.
LT <b>Tony Hills</b>	6-6 295 Jr.	DT <b>Roy Miller</b>	6-2 300 So.
Greg Dolan	6-7 290 So.	Derek Lokey	6-2 275 Jr.
LG <b>Kasey Studdard</b>	6-3 305 Sr.	NT <b>Frank Okam</b>	6-5 315 Jr.
Brett Valdez	6-4 305 Sr.	Thomas Marshall	6-6 293 Jr.
C <b>Lyle Sendlein</b>	6-5 305 Sr.	DE <b>Brian Robison</b>	6-3 267 Sr.
Dallas Griffin	6-4 275 Jr.	Brian Orakpo	6-4 238 So.
RG <b>Charlie Tanner</b>	6-4 280 Fr.	SLB <b>Robert Killebrew</b>	6-2 230 Jr.
Cedric Dockery	6-4 315 So.	Drew Kelson	6-2 215 Jr.
RT <b>Justin Blalock</b>	6-4 329 Sr.	MLB <b>Rashad Bobino</b>	5-11 230 So.
Adam Ulatoski	6-8 290 Fr.	Rodrick Muckelroy	6-2 230 Fr.
TE <b>Neale Tweedie</b>	6-5 265 Sr.	WLB <b>Drew Kelson</b>	6-2 215 Jr.
Jermichael Finley	6-5 220 Fr.	Sergio Kindle	6-4 225 Fr.
WR <b>Billy Pittman</b>	6-0 198 Jr.	LCB <b>Aaron Ross</b>	6-1 192 Sr.
Quan Cosby	5-11 200 So.	Brandon Foster	5-9 180 Jr.
QB <b>Colt McCoy</b>	6-3 195 Fr.	SS <b>Michael Griffin</b>	6-0 205 Sr.
Jevan Snead	6-3 215 Fr.	Matt Melton	6-0 210 Jr.
TB <b>Jamaal Charles</b>	6-1 190 So.	FS <b>Marcus Griffin</b>	6-0 195 Jr.
<b>Selvin Young</b>	6-0 215 Sr.	Erick Jackson	6-2 185 Jr.
FB <b>Chris Ogbonnaya</b>	6-1 220 So.	RCB <b>Tarell Brown</b>	6-0 200 Sr.
Marcus Myers	6-3 250 Sr.	Ryan Palmer	5-10 185 So.
PK <b>Greg Johnson</b>	6-1 195 Sr.	P <b>Greg Johnson</b>	6-1 195 Sr.

Returning starters in bold



# TEXAS TECH RED RAIDERS

**W**ith major question marks at quarterback and running back, the Red Raiders will have to rely upon their defense this season. Unlike previous years, that might not be a problem.

Since taking over as head coach at Texas Tech in 2000, Mike Leach has guided an offense that has produced the nation's leading passer in each of his six seasons. A season ago, the Red Raiders scored 56 or more points five times, including an 80-21 laugh against Sam Houston State. The talent level is finally catching up on the other side of the ball, which could spell trouble for opponents in 2006.

Under the steady direction of defensive coordinator Lyle Setencich, the transformation on defense has been nothing short of miraculous. Last season, the Red Raiders ranked 15th nationally in pass defense while increasing their total takeaways from 19 to 28. Texas Tech also pitched its first shutout since 2002 in blanking Baylor, 28-0. The improvement is underscored by the fact that at one point during the 2003 season the Red Raiders were ranked dead last nationally in total defense.

The most recent example of Texas Tech's defensive resurgence came in this spring's Red-Black game when the high-powered offense mustered a paltry three points through the first three quarters. Despite losing six starters, including three in the secondary, the Red Raiders will have an abundance of athleticism and speed.

The defensive leaders are senior linebackers Keyunta Dawson and Fletcher Session, who combined for 143 tackles a year ago. The 6-foot-2, 260-pound Dawson earned second-team All-Big 12 selection honors at defensive end in 2005 but, with his impending move to strong-side linebacker, has dropped more than 10 pounds and will contend for All-America status this fall.

"I think it's a good fit," Dawson said. "I like to move

around and run a little bit. I think it's a good position for me."

Senior linebacker Brock Stratton missed all but four games with a knee injury last season but is expected to be back in the starting lineup this fall. Stratton is an intriguing player who got a late start on his college career after serving a two-year mission out of high school. If he can regain the form that made him Big 12 Co-Defensive Freshman of the Year in 2003, the linebacking corps will be one of the conference's most productive trios.

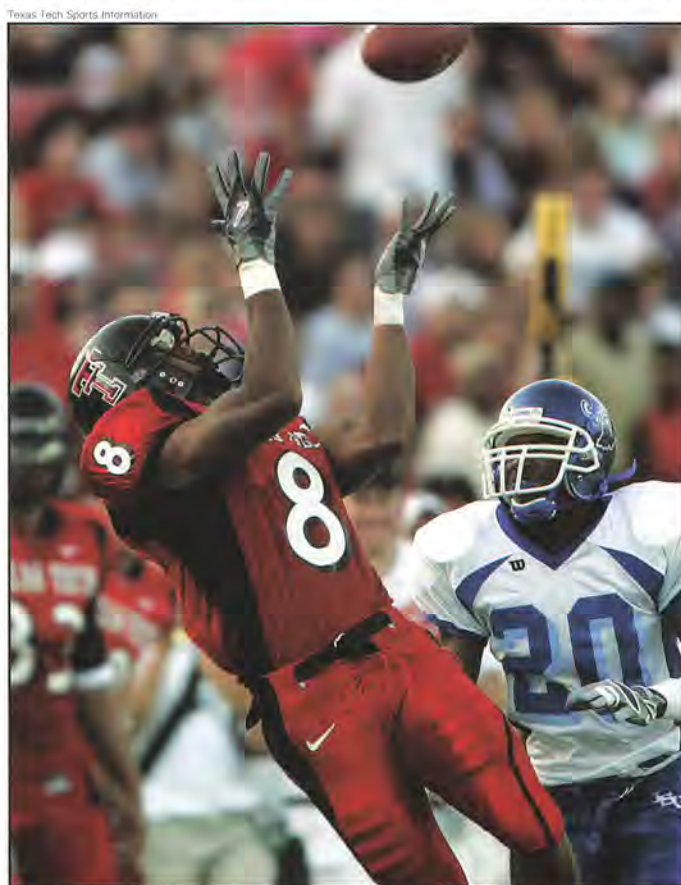
With Dawson's move to linebacker, the defensive line will look to senior tackles Chris Hudler and Ken Scott to lead the way. One end spot should go to sophomore McKinner Dixon, who received significant playing time as a true freshman last season. Competition for the other starting spot will heat up this fall as junior Seth Nitschmann will attempt to make a comeback after sitting out last season as a medical redshirt. If he can't win the job, junior Tyler Yenser and redshirt freshman Rashad Hunt will be among those waiting in the wings.

The major question is how Texas Tech will replace three starters from the secondary that led to the improved pass defense from a year ago. The answer will come this fall, but it will be difficult to replace impact players such as safeties Vincent Meeks

(12 career interceptions) and Dwayne Slay, the Big 12 leader with 114 tackles last season.

Replacing its starting quarterback, on the other hand, is nothing new to Texas Tech. This season, however, marks the first time since 2002 that a fifth-year senior won't step into the role as a first-time starter.

Sophomore Graham Harrell is the odds-on favorite to open the season under center after battling redshirt freshman Chris Todd during the spring. Harrell completed better than 70 percent of his passes in limited duty as a



Senior Joel Filani led the Big 12 Conference with 87.3 receiving yards per game.



freshman and, if he starts for three seasons in Lubbock, should leave school as one of the most decorated passers in NCAA history.

"Graham Harrell and Chris Todd both do some things well," Leach said. "Graham does things quickly and releases the ball well. Todd is very accurate, too, and they both have great capabilities for us."

The most significant loss on offense is at running back, where Texas Tech must find a way to fill the shoes of Taurean Henderson. All Henderson did was set NCAA career records for receptions by a running back (303) and consecutive games with at least one reception (51). That's to say nothing of his career totals of 50 rushing touchdowns and 5,308 all-purpose yards.

"I don't think we are sure how big a void we will have after Taurean Henderson finished at tailback for us last year," Leach said following spring practice. "Taurean could do everything for us back there."

The leading candidate to start in the backfield is sophomore Shannon Woods, who made his mark by averaging a team-leading 20.7 yards as a kickoff return specialist. Woods fits the job description for the single-back in the Texas Tech system, which requires a back that has slippery moves, great hands and the ability to accelerate out of traffic.

With a relatively unknown commodity at running back, the Red Raiders will be able to rely upon an outstanding group of receivers. Three seniors — Joel Filani, Jarrett Hicks and Robert Johnson — join junior Danny Amendola to form a quartet that will give opposing defensive coordinators nightmares. Combined, those four accounted for 131 receptions, 25 touchdowns and more than 3,000 receiving yards last year. Filani led the conference with 87.3 receiving yards per game and was a first-team All-Big 12 selection.

The offensive line also returns virtually intact with tackles Gabe Hall and Glenn January, center Brandon Jones and right guard Manuel Ramirez all coming back for their senior seasons. Ramirez is one of the strongest linemen in the Big 12 at 6-4, 339 pounds and can bench press 550 pounds.

At 5-11, 170 pounds, junior kicker Alex Trlica won't be confused with Ramirez. Trlica is strong, however, when it comes to converting extra points, converting all 115 that he has attempted in his career.

Trlica should be busy once again booting extra points as the Red Raider offense resumes its regular activity of lighting up scoreboards across the nation this fall. If the defense continues to improve and, there is reason to think that it won't, Texas Tech could be lighting up Big 12 opponents as well. ■ — *By Shawn Heilbron*



Second-team All-Big 12 defensive end Keyunta Dawson is moving to strongside linebacker.



## At A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

Texas Tech has four receivers who could all contend for conference honors this season. They will provide matchup problems for defenses all year. With **Keyunta Dawson** at linebacker, the Red Raiders have an extremely athletic group at that position.

#### QUESTION MARKS

The secondary was hit hard by graduation last year. With senior cornerback **Antonio Huffman** the lone returning starter, Texas Tech will need to find some play-makers in a hurry.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

**Robert Johnson** arrived in Lubbock as one of the most heralded junior college quarterbacks in the nation in 2004. Following a redshirt year in 2004, he was moved to receiver where he quietly led the Big 12 with 67 receptions along with teammate **Taurean Henderson**.

#### ADIEU TO ASTROTURF

Jones SBC Stadium will have a new surface in 2006 as the school will install FieldTurf in time for the home opener on Sept. 2. The new synthetic turf will replace AstroTurf, which had been the school's playing surface for more than 30 years.

#### REMEMBERING BROWN

Texas Tech announced plans to form the **Dave Brown** Endowed Scholarship, named after the former Red Raider cornerbacks coach and NFL veteran. Brown passed away in January after suffering a heart attack just a few days before his 53rd birthday.

3<sup>rd</sup>  
SOUTH  
DIVISION

#### 2005 RECORD: 9-3 CONFERENCE FINISH: 6-2

S 10	Fla. International	W, 56-3
S 17	Sam Houston St.	W, 80-21
S 24	Indiana State	W, 63-7
O 1	Kansas	W, 30-17
O 8	@Nebraska	W, 34-31
O 15	Kansas State	W, 59-20
O 22	@Texas	L, 52-17
O 29	@Baylor	W, 28-0
N 5	Texas A&M	W, 56-17
N 12	@Oklahoma St.	L, 24-17
N 19	Oklahoma	W, 23-21
J 2	*vs. Alabama	L, 13-10

\*Cotton Bowl, Dallas, Texas

### TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

X	<b>Jarrett Hicks</b>	6-3 208 Sr.	LE	McKinner Dixon	6-3 265 So.
	Todd Walker	6-1 178 So.		Jared Williams	6-5 252 So.
LT	<b>Glenn January</b>	6-7 287 Sr.	NT	<b>Chris Hudler</b>	6-3 289 Sr.
	Marlon Winn	6-6 309 Fr.		Dek Blake	6-6 260 Sr.
LG	Louis Vasquez	6-6 335 Fr.	DT	<b>Ken Scott</b>	6-2 315 Jr.
	Ofa Mohetau	6-3 340 Jr.		Dek Blake	6-6 260 Sr.
C	<b>Brandon Jones</b>	6-3 309 Sr.	RE	Seth Nitschmann	6-4 246 Sr.
	Shawn Byrnes	6-3 318 Fr.		Tyler Yenzler	6-4 235 Jr.
RG	<b>Manuel Ramirez</b>	6-4 328 Sr.	SLB	<b>Keyunta Dawson</b>	6-2 248 Sr.
	Brandon Carter	6-6 351 Fr.		Kellen Tillman	6-11 237 Sr.
RT	<b>Gabe Hall</b>	6-4 293 Sr.	MLB	Brock Stratton	5-11 228 Jr.
	Andrew Johnson	6-4 300 Fr.		Paul Williams	6-1 221 Jr.
Y	<b>Robert Johnson</b>	6-1 218 Sr.	WLB	<b>Fletcher Session</b>	6-0 232 Sr.
	Grant Walker	6-1 187 Jr.		Brent Slaughter	6-1 209 Sr.
Z	<b>Joel Filani</b>	6-3 214 Sr.	LCB	<b>Antonio Huffman</b>	5-11 179 Sr.
	Catron Houston	5-11 183 So.		Marcus Bunton	5-8 187 So.
QB	Graham Harrell	6-3 197 So.	SS	Joe Garcia	6-2 206 Jr.
-or-	Chris Todd	6-3 201 Fr.		Anthony Hines	6-1 236 So.
RB	Shannon Woods	5-11 197 So.	FS	Darcel McBeth	6-1 193 So.
	Kobe Lewis	5-6 167 Fr.		Lance Fuller	6-0 217 So.
H	<b>Danny Amendola</b>	5-11 176 Jr.	RCB	Chris Parker	5-11 177 Jr.
	L.A. Reed	6-2 203 So.		Brent Nickerson	6-0 171 Fr.
PK	<b>Alex Trlica</b>	6-0 172 Jr.	P	<b>Alex Reyes</b>	6-1 226 Sr.

Returning starters in bold



# BAYLOR BEARS

**D**iscussion of high expectations at Baylor is usually reserved for the women's basketball team. That is not the case any longer as Guy Morriss has helped restore pride in a program that was once the perpetual doormat of the Big 12.

The fourth-year head coach is hoping that a new offensive scheme will help restore some old luster and help propel Baylor to its first bowl game since 1994.

Last season was a breakthrough year in many ways for the Bears, who are coming off of their most successful season in 10 years. They won two Big 12 games for the first time ever and narrowly missed out on road wins at traditional conference powerhouses Oklahoma and Texas A&M, which both needed overtime to eke out victories against Baylor. The Bears also said goodbye to a 24-game road losing skid by posting three victories away from Waco. The capper was a season-ending win against Oklahoma State that Morriss correctly anticipated would carry over into off-season workouts.

"I believe everyone is excited to get back out on the field and get after it," said Morriss. "Since the end of last season, the whole team has really started to buy into the whole message of doing things the right way. We are starting to look like a football team is supposed to."

Aiding the new-look Bears is a transition to the spread offense, which Morriss ran with success while the head coach at Kentucky. New offensive coordinator Lee Hays, a protégé of Texas Tech head coach Mike Leach, was brought in to install the new system. He will have a capable triggerman in senior quarterback Shawn Bell, who a season ago completed nearly 60 percent of his passes and boasted a 2-to-1 touchdown to interception ratio. Bell went 5-4 after supplanting Terrance Parks as the starter and, after setting a school record with 190 completions, is

just 108 shy of becoming Baylor's career leader in that category.

Two senior receivers, Trent Shelton and Dominique Zeigler, should also be the beneficiaries of the emphasis on the passing game. Zeigler is coming off a season in which he led the Bears with 47 grabs and five touchdowns while Shelton's streak of 33 games with a reception is one off of the school record.

With the new offense on display in the spring game,

Bell, Shelton and Zeigler gave Baylor fans a glimpse of things to come. Bell was extremely efficient, completing 24 of 34 passes for 239 yards and three scores, including a 65-yard touchdown to Zeigler. Shelton hauled in six balls for 133 yards and was on the receiving end of an 82-yard touchdown pass from Zeigler.

Although there is still work to be done, Morriss was pleased with what he saw with his offense during the spring.

"I'd like to see us be a little more consistent and move the sticks a little bit," he said. "We did hit some big plays, which is good to see."

Big plays should also come from the running backs. Baylor returns all but 32 rushing yards from a ground attack that will be counted upon to help control the ball this season. Senior Paul Mosley led the team with 657 yards and seven touch-

downs, but his role in the passing game should increase significantly after catching just 12 passes last year. He and junior Brandon Whitaker (481 yards, one touchdown) combined for 323 touches without a fumble, helping Baylor improve its turnover margin from -15 in 2004 to +5.

While the Bears displayed good hands last season, Morriss decided to go hands-on with his offensive line in 2006. The former NFL lineman took over coaching duties to coincide with the changes on offense.

The Bears' offensive line returns senior Will Blaylock at

Baylor Sports Information



**Wide receiver Dominique Zeigler led the Bears with 47 catches and five touchdowns.**



center, senior Yancy Boatner at right guard and junior Nick Pace at right tackle. Sophomore Jason Smith, who started seven games at tight end a year ago, has been moved inside to left tackle and is the likely starter at that spot. With the vacancy at tight end, junior Mike Miller will enter fall practice as the starter despite catching only one pass last season.

Defensively, there is work to be done as Baylor faces the task of replacing seven starters. The Bears lost their top four tacklers, including their two starting linebackers. One positive is the addition of Nick Moore, a transfer from Georgia Tech, at linebacker. Moore had a solid spring and should be an impact performer.

"Moore is a veteran guy at linebacker and had a good spring," Morriss said. "We have some talented young guys who can step in and fill the gaps in linebacker."



Baylor Sports Information

**C.J. Wilson tied teammate Anthony Arline for the Big 12 lead with five interceptions.**

part-time starter in 2005.

Two seniors, end Marcus Foreman and nose tackle M.T. Robinson, also return on the defensive line. Foreman is the team's top returning tackler with 58 while Robinson's 22 career starts are the most of any Baylor defensive player. Behind those two are a host of talented, yet unproven, players. Senior tackles Corey Ford and Quincy Jenkins could figure into the starting equation at some point this fall.

"I believe the problem is just experience (on defense)," said Morriss. "We have some good kids coming up in the program, and I feel we can be as good as — or better than — what we've been in the past. It's just a matter of some of those guys getting some playing time."

With all of the holes to fill on defense, one player who will be a large part of helping Baylor with its field position is senior punter Daniel Sepulveda. A two-time All-America selection, Sepulveda suffered an ACL injury playing basketball this spring but expects to be ready for the season opener against TCU.

Sepulveda might not have as many opportunities to kick this year if the Baylor offense clicks the way Morriss hopes that it will. If it does, Baylor fans should be able to expect a bowl game as well as a serious dose of momentum for the future of its program. ■

— By Shawn Heilbron



## AT A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

The Bears have one of the conference's top receiving duos in **Trent Shelton** and **Dominique Zeigler**. Their numbers should skyrocket in the spread offense. Baylor's specialists, kicker **Ryan Havens** and punter **Daniel Sepulveda**, will help win some games in 2006.

#### QUESTION MARKS

Depth on defense has to be a concern for Baylor. With only four starters returning, defensive coordinator **Bill Bradley** will have to locate some new leaders in a hurry. The defensive line will need the most help after Baylor ranked near the bottom of the conference in rushing defense and sacks.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

In any spread offense, success or failure is usually incumbent upon the competency of the quarterback to make quick reads. **Shawn Bell** is an intelligent veteran who doesn't have a rocket for an arm, but will more than compensate for that with his ability to read the defense.

#### ELITE COMPANY

Sepulveda, who is recovering from knee surgery, will attempt to become the second three-time All-American in Baylor football history. If he is able to accomplish the feat, Sepulveda will join BU great **Mike Singletary** (1977-80).

#### FOR STARTERS

A key win came in last season's 28-23 victory at SMU, which helped the Bears to a 3-0 start. That might be more difficult to accomplish in 2006 as Baylor opens on the road against defending Mountain West and Houston Bowl champion TCU.

**4<sup>th</sup>**  
**SOUTH**  
**DIVISION**

#### 2005 RECORD: 5-6 CONFERENCE FINISH: 2-6

S 3	@SMU	W, 28-23
S 10	Samford	W, 48-14
S 17	@Army	W, 20-10
O 1	@Texas A&M	L, 16-13 (ot)
O 8	@Iowa State	W, 23-13
O 15	Nebraska	L, 23-14
O 22	@Oklahoma	L, 37-30 (2ot)
O 29	Texas Tech	L, 28-0
N 5	Texas	L, 62-0
N 12	@Missouri	L, 31-16
N 19	Oklahoma State	W, 44-34

### TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

XWR <b>Trent Shelton</b>	6-2 207 Sr.	DE <b>Marcus Foreman</b>	6-2 248 Sr.
Mikail Baker	6-0 191 So.	Jason Lamb	6-6 252 Fr.
LT <b>Travis Farst</b>	6-7 327 Sr.	DT <b>Klayton Shoals</b>	6-3 298 Sr.
Matt Lott	6-5 318 Sr.	Vincent Rhodes	6-2 310 So.
LG <b>Chad Smith</b>	6-6 299 Jr.	NT <b>M.T. Robinson</b>	6-1 305 Sr.
Thad Boatner	6-7 273 Fr.	Quincy Jenkins	6-1 286 Sr.
C <b>Yancy Boatner</b>	6-4 336 Jr.	DE <b>Julian Hill</b>	6-3 254 Sr.
Sam Sladge	6-2 266 Fr.	Geoff Nelson	6-2 252 Jr.
RG <b>Will Blaylock</b>	6-2 308 Sr.	OS <b>Maurice Linguist</b>	5-10 207 Sr.
Dan Gay	6-4 314 So.	Jeremy Williams	5-10 206 Fr.
RT <b>Jason Smith</b>	6-5 287 So.	MLB <b>Nick Moore</b>	6-1 227 Jr.
<b>Nick Pace</b>	6-3 289 Jr.	Joe Pawelek	6-2 225 Fr.
Y/H <b>Mike Miller</b>	6-3 243 Jr.	LB <b>Antonio Jones</b>	6-3 229 Fr.
Jordan Adams	6-4 248 Jr.	Ben Hixson	6-2 236 So.
ZWR <b>Dominique Zeigler</b>	6-3 180 Sr.	CB <b>Anthony Arline</b>	6-2 194 Sr.
Thomas White	6-2 204 So.	James Todd	6-0 184 Sr.
QB <b>Shawn Bell</b>	6-1 219 Sr.	FS <b>Dwain Crawford</b>	6-0 202 So.
Blake Szymanski	6-4 198 Fr.	Jordan Lake	6-2 203 Fr.
TB <b>Paul Mosley</b>	6-3 235 Sr.	ROV <b>Brandon Stiggers</b>	6-0 188 Jr.
Brandon Whitaker	5-10 192 Jr.	Marlon Price	6-2 180 So.
FB <b>Damon Dotson</b>	5-9 211 Sr.	CB <b>C.J. Wilson</b>	6-1 195 Sr.
Keegan Vann	6-0 242 Jr.	Alton Wideman	5-8 174 Jr.
PK <b>Ryan Havens</b>	5-10 197 Sr.	P <b>Daniel Sepulveda</b>	6-3 227 Sr.

Returning starters in bold



# TEXAS A&M AGGIES

Nov. 11,  
College Station, Texas

**O**ne year ago, Texas A&M head coach Dennis Franchione probably spent more time reviewing his team's medical chart than his depth chart.

The injury report last season often resembled the length of a Tolstoy novel instead of a press release tidbit, as eight A&M players were lost to season-ending injuries. Among scholarship players, the Aggies lost more than 70 combined games because of injuries.

Emotional scars, however, may have been more painful than the physical wounds. After a 5-2 start, the Aggies dropped their last four games, including blowout losses at home against Iowa State and on the road at Texas Tech.

The final result was a 5-6 season that included many more dubious distinctions than memorable moments. The traditionally defensive-dominant Aggies finished 107th nationally in total defense and 94th in scoring defense. Among the 117 Division I-A schools, no one was worse against the pass than Texas A&M.

"You don't forget the frustrations of last year," said Franchione, who is entering his fourth year as the Aggies' head coach. "I couldn't if I tried. I may never forget watching (wide receiver) Chad Schroeder go down (with a broken leg). He was the fourth wide receiver we lost for the year, and I remember thinking, 'When will this (injury onslaught) ever end?' So, no, I haven't forgotten last year, and our players haven't forgotten, either.

"But I don't have to bring it up with them for motivational purposes. They're already motivated. Besides, this is a different team with a different makeup, and it needs to be handled differently."

Indeed, different is the definitive word for the 2006 Aggies, beginning with the coaching staff. Franchione hired four new assistants, including a new defensive coordinator (Gary Darnell) and two new secondary coaches (Bill Clay and Van Malone). The Aggies also feature a dif-

ferent defensive alignment (4-2-5) and a different starting quarterback in Stephen McGee.

All of the differences were impressive during spring practices, and, most significantly, they have produced a new sense of optimism regarding the 2006 season.

"It's a totally different feeling," said defensive lineman Chris Harrington. "The enthusiasm level is through the roof."

It will take more than an enthusiastic approach to turn

things around at A&M, where the Aggies have made just one bowl appearance in the last four seasons. But if good team chemistry is a requisite to a resurgence, then the Aggies are at least in an ideal starting point in their attempt to ascend the Big 12 South's ladder.

Perhaps no other position has a more different feel to it than quarterback, where the extremely gifted — but sometimes brooding — Reggie McNeal has departed, leaving the offensive reins to McGee. When McNeal was injured in the third quarter of the 10th game last season, McGee energized the Aggies and their fans with six spirited quarters against Oklahoma and Texas.

McGee is a talented passer, throwing for 8,256 yards in high school. He's also a strong runner, rushing for 175 yards in six quarters against OU and UT. But his most endear-

ing quality may be his leadership skills. Whereas McNeal may have been the prototypical athlete at quarterback, McGee appears to be the ideal leader.

"He has more fun out there playing and charging up others than anybody on the field," Franchione says of McGee. "I say this with some trepidation of putting too much on him too quickly, but if I had to compare Stephen, I would say Alex Smith. He's not caught up in how we move the football; he's focused on whether or not we move it and win games. If it takes him knocking over the linebacker or throwing it 50 yards, he'll do whatever it takes."

Texas A&M Sports Information



Sophomore quarterback Stephen McGee was impressive after taking over for the injured Reggie McNeal.



With four returning starters in the offensive line (Yemi Babalola, Corey Clark, Kirk Elder and Cody Wallace) and an abundance of talented receivers, McGee should have the time and the targets to make things happen through the air. Wide receivers Tydrick Riley, Earvin Taylor and Chad Schroeder all return after enduring season-ending injuries last fall, giving A&M an explosive receiving corps. Tight end Martellus Bennett is a special talent, as well.

The backfield also returns plenty of firepower, as Courtney Lewis and the powerful, 274-pound Jorvorskie Lane return. True freshman Mike Goodson, who may have been the top high school running back prospect in Texas, should also figure into the tailback mix.

Of course, offense isn't the concern in Aggieland. A&M should be able to score with the best in the Big 12. The primary concern is on the other side of the ball.

"We know our ability to improve this year will be largely based on the improvement of our defense," Franchione said.

A&M yielded an average of 43.5 points per game during its season-ending four-game losing streak last year. The Aggies also ranked 113th nationally in third-down percentage defense, allowing opponents to convert at a startling rate of 47.9 percent.

Based on experience and improved speed, the 2006 version should be better. How much better will go a long way toward determining whether A&M will be a contender

for a minor bowl or for the Big 12 South title.

Darnell will utilize a 4-2-5 alignment, and the secondary is filled with enough talented athletes to make the scheme work. The trio of safeties — Japhus Brown, Melvin Bullitt and Devin Gregg — provide plenty of playmaking potential, while speedy cornerbacks Marquis Carpenter and Danny Gorrer are steadily improving.

The Aggies are thin at linebacker, although Justin Warren is a terrific athlete and a first-team All-Big 12 prospect after averaging nearly 10 tackles per game last season. The other starting spot could be manned by 25-year-old junior college transfer Mark Dodge, who previously served in the Presidential Honor Guard and was inside the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

Harrington is a steady and dependable force along the defensive front, while Red Bryant and Jason Jack — when healthy — feature star potential. Sophomore Michael Bennett is also a promising youngster at defensive end.

Aside from punter Justin Brantly, the special teams are also loaded with questions. But, with an explosive offense and a favorable non-conference schedule, the Aggies will almost certainly be bowling again this holiday season. And if Darnell's defense can avoid injuries and prevent a few of the backbreaking big plays that A&M so often surrendered last year, the Aggies could even finish as high as second in the Big 12 South. ■ — *By Rusty Burson*



Linebacker Justin Warren led the Big 12 in tackles with 9.5 stops per game.

Texas A&M Sports Information



## AT A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

With promising sophomore quarterback **Stephen McGee** and with the return of big-play receivers **Chad Schroeder**, **Tydrick Riley** and **Earvin Taylor**, along with tight end **Martellus Bennett**, the offensive attack should be at least as explosive as last year when A&M averaged more than 200 yards rushing and 200 yards passing per game.

#### QUESTION MARKS

Can the Aggies stop anyone? They didn't consistently last year. There is no shortage of talented youngsters in the secondary, although many of them were torched last year when A&M finished last nationally in pass defense. Special teams is also an area of concern, as A&M must replace a dependable place-kicker and find a return specialist. A&M finished 109th nationally in kickoff returns last season.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

McGee was impressive after taking over for the injured **Reggie McNeal**, who suffered a sprained ankle in the third quarter against Oklahoma. In those five and a half quarters, McGee rushed for 175 yards on 34 carries and completed 9-of-29 passes for 83 yards, while leading the Aggies to 10 scores or missed field goals on 19 drives.

#### VARIETY IN BLITZES

New defensive coordinator **Gary Darnell** says one of the keys to his unit's 4-2-5 alignment will be to find safeties who are capable of lining up and blitzing from various spots on the field. "If you just say a guy is an outside linebacker, and he lines up at the same spot every time, my daughter sitting on the 58th row knows where to find him," Darnell said.

5<sup>th</sup>  
SOUTH  
DIVISION

#### 2005 RECORD: 5-6 CONFERENCE FINISH: 3-5

S 3	@Clemson	L, 25-24
S 17	SMU	W, 66-8
S 22	Texas State	W, 44-31
O 1	Baylor	W, 16-13 (ot)
O 8	@Colorado	L, 41-20
O 15	Oklahoma State	W, 62-23
O 22	@Kansas State	W, 30-28
O 29	Iowa State	L, 42-14
N 5	@Texas Tech	L, 56-17
N 12	@Oklahoma	L, 36-30
N 25	Texas	L, 40-29

### TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WRZ <b>Chad Schroeder</b> 6-1 181 Sr.	DE <b>Chris Harrington</b> 6-5 263 Jr.
Howard Morrow 6-0 215 So.	<b>Jason Jack</b> 6-4 275 Jr.
OT <b>Yemi Babalola</b> 6-4 308 So.	DT <b>Chris Smith</b> 6-5 270 So.
Alex Kotzur 6-5 290 Sr.	Bryce Reed 6-1 304 Sr.
OG <b>Kirk Elder</b> 6-4 312 Jr.	DT <b>Red Bryant</b> 6-5 330 Jr.
Michael Shumard 6-5 299 Fr.	Marques Thornton 6-1 288 Sr.
C <b>Cody Wallace</b> 6-4 296 Jr.	DE <b>Cyril Obiozor</b> 6-4 270 So.
Kevin Matthews 6-3 296 Fr.	Michael Bennett 6-4 263 So.
SG <b>Grant Dickey</b> 6-5 313 Sr.	LB <b>Mark Dodge</b> 6-2 219 Jr.
Chris Yoder 6-3 318 Jr.	Stephen Hodge 6-1 230 Jr.
ST <b>Corey Clark</b> 6-6 311 Jr.	LB <b>Justin Warren</b> 6-3 245 Sr.
Travis Schneider 6-7 298 So.	Matt Featherston 6-2 250 Fr.
TE <b>Martellus Bennett</b> 6-7 248 So.	WH <b>Arkeith Brown</b> 6-0 175 So.
Joey Thomas 6-5 248 Jr.	Chevar Bryson 6-0 186 Fr.
WRX <b>Kerry Franks</b> 5-10 185 Jr.	CB <b>Danny Gorrer</b> 6-0 182 So.
Cody Beyer 6-1 180 Fr.	Marquis Carpenter 6-0 179 Jr.
QB <b>Stephen McGee</b> 6-3 207 So.	FS <b>Devin Gregg</b> 5-11 195 So.
Ty Branyon 6-3 213 Sr.	Japhus Brown 5-11 203 Jr.
TB <b>Courtney Lewis</b> 6-0 204 Sr.	SS <b>Melvin Bullitt</b> 6-1 204 Sr.
Jorvorskie Lane 5-11 274 So.	Alton Dixon 5-11 207 So.
FB <b>Chris Alexander</b> 5-11 246 Jr.	CB <b>Jordan Peterson</b> 5-10 192 So.
Greg Boothe 6-1 221 Sr.	Marcus Gold 5-7 180 Fr.
PK <b>Layne Neumann</b> 6-0 175 Sr.	P <b>Justin Brantly</b> 6-3 232 So.

Returning starters in bold



# OKLAHOMA STATE COWBOYS

Oct. 28, Stillwater, Okla.

**L**ast season at Oklahoma State, turnover begot turnovers.

A new head coach, a new coaching staff, a new offense, a new defense, a new quarterback — it all piled up and led to a new experience: losing.

None of the players and only two of the coaches from the 2005 squad were on the field in 2001, the last time O-State experienced a losing season.

At the heart of it all was turnovers. OSU ranked 114th out of 117 teams last season with a minus-1.36 per game turnover ratio.

A 3-0 nonconference start belied the oncoming problem. The Cowboys went 1-7 in Big 12 play — worst in the league — and finished way out of the bowl picture for the first time in four years.

Fast-forward to 2006.

"We're a better football team than we were at the end of the year," coach Mike Gundy said at the end of spring practice. "I don't know if we're considerably better because it depends on how guys react when we get out there for real. But I can tell standing out there watching, we're a better team. It should show up next season."

Players who last season hadn't played much now have experience. Overall team depth is far better this season (Gundy in 2005 suspended eight players who were being counted on to contribute, or nearly one-fifth of the team's two-deep). And there is talent and athletic ability at key positions that just didn't have it last year.

All eyes will be on third-year sophomore Bobby Reid, the talented high school star from Houston who goes into this season with the starting job firmly in his grasp.

Reid graduated high school early in 2004 with the intention of immediately competing for the job. But he injured his throwing shoulder in the spring and lost all of 2004 as Donovan Woods led the Cowboys to the Houston Bowl, then scuffled as a backup in 2005 before Woods was moved

to defense.

Reid scuffled again as the starter, trying to master the intricacies of new coordinator Larry Fedora's spread offense. He completed just 48 percent of his passes with two touchdowns and four interceptions in seven games (he missed more than four games with an ankle/foot injury).

"Last year, when I walked off the field, there were a lot of doubts in my head," Reid said.

Those doubts are now gone, he said. Reid was clearly the team's top quarterback during the spring, when he completed 56-of-82 passes (68 percent) for 868 yards in five scrimmages.

"Every day I wake up, I feel I have to learn something new and make myself better in any kind of way," Reid said. "Last year is behind me."

This season, Reid will have more weapons with which to work. D'Juan Woods, already third in school history in career catches and receiving yards, is a senior who's poised for a big-time season. Next to him is North Carolina transfer Adarius Bowman, who put on a big-play clinic in the spring.

Last season, with three quarterbacks taking turns, D'Juan Woods was the receiving corps' only consistent playmaker. He made 35 percent of the team's catches (he had 56; the rest of the wide-outs had 54), accounted for 47 percent of the team's receiving yards (879 of 1,880) and caught eight of the team's 11 TD passes.

Woods can't wait for Bowman to take the field. "You don't have to worry

about just one guy making the plays," Woods said. "I don't have to take so much on my shoulders."

Behind them is tailback Mike Hamilton, a third-year sophomore who led the Big 12 in rushing most of last season and eventually finished second in the league with a school freshman record 961 yards. Also back is fullback Julius Crosslin, who scored 10 TDs last season.

Up front, David Koenig and Corey Hilliard return, but will change positions and man the tackle spots. And sophomore center David Washington is back, but needs two

Oklahoma State Sports Information



Wide receiver D'Juan Woods had 56 catches for 879 yards and scored eight touchdowns last year as a junior.



guards to emerge during training camp.

Tight end is a strength, with Paschal Smith and Brandon Pettigrew returning from last season. Both had a strong spring.

OSU's defense has to get better, and it won't be easy with the graduation of four linebackers who had started throughout their careers.

Then again, the 2005 Cowboys ranked 95th nationally in rushing defense, total defense and scoring defense. Anything, it seems, would be an improvement.

"Defensively, we gave up too many big plays," Gundy said. "We missed too many tackles. We can't do that. Our defense has to tackle better in space."

To begin with, there should be less space because the defensive line is intact. Although the playmaking needs to be better from tackles Xavier Lawson-Kennedy, Ryan McBean and Josh Pinaire, they have the ability to succeed in the Big 12.

Defensive end should be the team's best position, with seniors Victor DeGrate, Darnell Smith and Marque Fountain returning and junior Nathan Peterson, a former starter, back from a knee injury. DeGrate had a team-high 11 tackles for loss and five sacks last season, and in the spring he showed he can be an impact player.

Question marks abound, however, in the secondary and at linebacker.

Junior Rod Johnson, who finished third on the team with 74 tackles last season, is a collision waiting to happen. What's missing is experience around him.

Former Texas commitment Chris Collins, a freshman who has missed two years because of legal problems, looked at times in the spring like the team's most athletic defender. At the other linebacker, converted safety Jeremy Nethon is expected to compete with sophomores Alex Odiari and Marcus Brown.

The secondary will have to mature quickly. Donovan Woods, the former quarterback who switched to free safety last season, moves to strong safety in '06. Freshman Andre Sexton emerged from spring as the top candidate at free safety. At cornerback, part-time starters Martel Van Zant and Calvin Mickens, a pair of sophomores, are back but lack big-game experience.

Place-kicker could become the team's most intriguing position battle. In 2004, Jason Ricks made 11-of-16 field goals and 47-of-49 PATs. When Ricks got hurt last season, Bruce Redden came in and made 11-of-14 field goals and 23-of-24 PATs.

Punter Matt Fodge averaged just 39.9 yards per kick last season and had four punts blocked.

Kick returner and punt returner are wide open after speedy Daniel McLemore, who led the Cowboys in both categories last season, graduated. ■ — *By John E. Hoover*



Offensive lineman **Corey Hilliard** was a second-team All-Big 12 selection.



## AT A GLANCE

### PROJECTED 2006 FINISH:

#### STRENGTHS

If tailback **Mike Hamilton** stays healthy, expect a 1,000-yard season. If quarterback **Bobby Reid** can rein in the careless turnovers, the offense could thrive. **D'Juan Woods** and **Adarius Bowman** are outstanding deep threats. Defensive line, particularly at end, will be the team's deepest position.

#### QUESTION MARKS

The secondary is full of inexperience, and the linebackers have promise but, outside of returning starter **Rod Johnson**, haven't played a down at the position. Depth on the offensive line is a problem, and quarterback remains a concern because Reid hasn't shown he can take care of the football.

#### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Bowman has been chomping at the bit since transferring from North Carolina. After sitting out last season, Bowman showed in spring practice that he is capable of being a big-play complement to steady Woods.

#### HAPPY NEW YEAR

After giving the university \$70 million three years ago, OSU alum and Texas oilman **Boone Pickens** — after whom the school renamed its stadium — gave OSU \$165 million in January, the largest such gift ever to an American university's athletic department.

#### 'LEGENDS' RETURN

**Ernest Anderson**, **Hart Lee Dykes**, **Barry Sanders** and **R.W. McQuarters** returned for this year's Orange and White Spring Game. Coach **Mike Gundy** guessed that more than 400 former players will participate in next year's "Legends Weekend" reunion.

6<sup>th</sup>  
SOUTH  
DIVISION

#### 2005 RECORD: 4-7 CONFERENCE FINISH: 1-7

S3	Montana State	W, 15-10
S8	Florida Atlantic	W, 23-3
S17	Arkansas State	W, 20-10
O1	Colorado	L, 34-0
O8	Missouri	L, 38-31
O15	@Texas A&M	L, 62-23
O22	@Iowa State	L, 37-10
O29	Texas	L, 47-28
N12	Texas Tech	W, 24-17
N19	@Baylor	L, 44-34
N26	@Oklahoma	L, 42-14

### TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	<b>D'Juan Woods</b>	6-1	210	Sr.	DE	<b>Victor DeGrate</b>	6-3	250	Sr.
	Anthony Parks	6-0	190	Jr.		Marque Fountain	6-1	260	Jr.
LT	<b>Corey Hilliard</b>	6-5	310	Sr.	DT	<b>Ryan McBean</b>	6-5	290	Sr.
	Noah Franklin	6-4	305	Fr.		Larry Brown	6-3	295	Sr.
LG	Steve Denning	6-4	285	So.	DT	<b>X. Lawson Kennedy</b>	6-1	315	Sr.
	Chris Simon	6-5	310	So.		Josh Pinaire	6-5	280	Jr.
C	<b>David Washington</b>	6-4	295	So.	DE	Darnell Smith	6-0	270	Sr.
	Kurt Seifried	6-4	300	Sr.		Nathan Peterson	6-2	250	Jr.
RG	Andrew Lawrence	6-4	305	Fr.	LB	Rodrick Johnson	6-3	255	Jr.
	Jacob Secrest	6-5	295	Fr.		Alex Odiari	6-1	225	Jr.
RT	<b>David Koenig</b>	6-4	290	Jr.	LB	Jeremy Nethon	5-9	220	Sr.
	Brady Bond	6-6	280	Fr.		Marcus Brown	6-2	240	So.
TE	Paschal Smith	6-4	270	Jr.	LB	Chris Collins	6-1	230	Fr.
	<b>Brandon Pettigrew</b>	6-5	255	So.		Donnell Williams	6-3	220	Fr.
WR	Adarius Bowman	6-4	215	Jr.	CB	Martel Van Zant	6-2	205	Jr.
	Tommy Devereaux	6-1	175	Jr.		Quentin Moore	5-11	185	So.
QB	Bobby Reid	6-3	225	So.	SS	<b>Donovan Woods</b>	6-2	220	Jr.
	Zac Robinson	6-3	195	Fr.		Grant Jones	5-10	195	Sr.
RB	<b>Mike Hamilton</b>	6-1	215	So.	FS	Andre Sexton	6-1	190	Fr.
	Calvin Roberts	5-11	225	Jr.		T.J. Bell	5-11	180	So.
FB	Julius Crosslin	5-11	240	Jr.	CB	<b>Calvin Mickens</b>	6-2	185	So.
	John Johnson	6-3	255	So.		Jacob Lacey	5-10	180	So.
PK	Bruce Redden	5-9	185	Sr.	P	<b>Matt Fodge</b>	6-0	180	So.

Returning starters in bold



# BIG 12 POSITION-BY-

## QUARTERBACK

### Best: Nebraska

(Key players)

Zac Taylor	6-2, 210	Sr.
Harrison Beck	6-2, 215	So.

Where would Nebraska have been without Taylor a season ago? Probably not in the Alamo Bowl. And where would it be this season without him? Definitely not in the role of Big 12 North favorite. His school-record-setting numbers included 237-of-430 completions for 2,653 yards and 19 touchdowns with 12 interceptions. He was as durable as he was efficient, getting up from 38 sacks. The jury is still out on the highly publicized Beck, who shed a redshirt in the 10th game of the season. He completed only 1-of-10 passes. The completion came in a critical situation against Kansas State, however.

### Rest

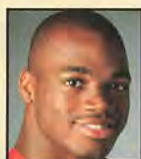
Iowa State's Bret Meyer put up numbers similar to Taylor's, slightly better in fact. Even the sacks were the same. Meyer was dropped 39 times and came back for more. As a result, the flip of a coin was needed to determine whether he or Taylor should be preseason first-team all-conference. And since it was a Huskers Illustrated coin, Taylor got the nod. But the two could have traded places. Sophomore Graham Harrell could be the next record-setting passer at Texas Tech. A freshman will replace Vince Young at Texas. And Kansas State figures to go into fall camp with five candidates, including three who have started.

## RUNNING BACK

### Best: Oklahoma

(Key players)

Adrian Peterson	6-2, 218	Jr.
Jacob Gutierrez	5-6, 186	Jr.



Peterson

If Peterson is healthy, and it appears he will be, the Sooners really don't need anyone else. Despite missing all or much of four games because of an ankle injury, he rushed for 1,108 yards and 14 touchdowns. And remember his freshman season? He was a consensus All-American and finished second in voting for the Heisman Trophy, rushing for a school-record 1,925 yards, including 1,365 after contact, a remarkable 71 percent. His credentials are impeccable. Gutierrez started twice, carrying 30 times for 173 yards against Baylor. And the Sooners have a couple of highly regarded freshmen coming in.

### Rest

Texas is a close second to the Sooners and would have been first because of its depth if not for the off-field problems and suspension of Ramonce Taylor. Even so, the Longhorns have a talented duo in sophomore Jamaal Charles and fifth-year senior Selvin Young, who has been hampered by injuries. Plus, they have the Big 12's best line clearing the way for them. Iowa State was much more successful when Stevie Hicks started at tailback, and Ryan Kock is a solid fullback, scoring a team-high 13 touchdowns. Nebraska has a talented group, headed by sophomores Marlon Lucky and Cody Glenn.

## RECEIVER

### Best: Texas Tech

(Key players)

Joel Filani	6-3, 222	Sr.
Jarrett Hicks	6-3, 210	Sr.
Robert Johnson	6-2, 202	Sr.
Danny Amendola	5-10, 181	Jr.

Mike Leach's offense is a showcase for receivers, of course. The system allows for eye-popping numbers. But the receivers still have to make the catches and gain the yards. Take your pick. They're almost interchangeable. Last season, Filani, Hicks and Johnson caught 197 passes between them for 2,853 yards and 22 touchdowns. Amendola, who's smaller than the other three, finished with a paltry (by Red Raider standards) 34 catches for 395 yards and three touchdowns. The key will be finding a quarterback who can consistently get the ball in their hands. Cody Hodges is gone.

### Rest

Iowa State's top seven receivers return, including Todd Blythe, Jon Davis and Austin Flynn. All three are big targets, with Blythe the biggest. He caught 51 passes for 1,000 yards and nine touchdowns last season. Flynn, a converted quarterback, made a seamless transition, catching 56 passes for 624 yards and three touchdowns. Davis's status is in doubt because of injury. Missouri has six of its top seven receivers back, including tight end duo Martin Rucker and Chase Coffman, who caught 94 passes between them for 1,070 yards and five touchdowns. Adarius Bowman, a transfer from North Carolina, is set to join D'Juan Woods at Oklahoma State. Dominique Zeigler should flourish in Baylor's new Tech-type offense. Oklahoma and Texas have big go-to guys in Malcolm Kelly (6-4, 204) and Limas Sweed (6-5, 219).

## OFFENSIVE LINE

### Best: Texas

(Key players)

Justin Blalock	6-4, 329	Sr.
Lyle Sendlein	6-5, 305	Sr.
Kasey Studdard	6-3, 305	Sr.



Blalock

Texas lost Jonathan Scott and Will Allen, but the Longhorns have three starters — and post-season honors candidates — returning in Blalock, Sendlein and Studdard. Blalock has started every game during his career, 38 of them. Sendlein and Studdard have football bloodlines. Both are sons of former NFL players. Junior Tony Hills, a converted tight end, learned as Scott's backup last season, while sophomore Cedric Dockery, brother of the NFL's Derrick Dockery, is Allen's likely successor. The Longhorns led the nation in scoring, averaging 50.2 points, ranked second in rushing (274.9 yards) and third in total offense (512.1 yards). Departed quarterback Vince Young was the key. But the line was a significant factor as well, and 60 percent of it returns to make the transition easier for Young's certain-to-be young successor.

### Rest

Four starters return at Texas Tech, including massive Manuel Ramirez. The 6-4, 339-pound guard is among the Big 12's strongest linemen. He can bench press 550 pounds, which should be comforting for Cody Hodges' replacement at quarterback. Iowa State also has four returning starters, all of them seniors: tackles Aaron Brant and Scott Fisher, guard Seth Zehr and center Scott Stephenson. Colorado is rebuilding around a pair of all-conference candidates, center Mark Fenton and guard Brian Daniels.



# POSITION BREAKDOWN

## DEFENSIVE LINE

### Best: Oklahoma

(Key players)

C.J. Ah You	6-4, 265	Sr.
Carl Pendleton	6-5, 277	Jr.
Calvin Thibodeaux	6-1, 251	Jr.
Larry Birdine	6-4, 258	Sr.
Cory Bennett	6-2, 275	So.



Ah You

The Sooners look to have a championship-caliber defense, beginning up front. Ah You, the Big 12 defensive newcomer of the year, and Thibodeaux are playmakers. Ah You was credited with seven sacks, three fumbles caused and two pass break-ups, Thibodeaux with 10 sacks and two fumbles caused to earn second-team All-Big 12 recognition from the conference coaches. Pendleton started eight games, while Birdine, from whom big things were expected, missed the season because of a torn left biceps. He was in the regular rotation at end in 2004, when he had seven sacks. Cory Bennett steps in after backing up the departed Dusty Dvoracek, and prize recruit Gerald McCoy could play without redshirting.

### Rest

Texas is in Oklahoma's class, despite the loss of All-American Rodrique Wright. Seniors Tim Crowder and Brian Robison are returning starters at the ends, and Frank Okam is back at tackle. Nebraska also should be solid up front. Tackles Le Kevin Smith and Titus Adams are gone, but the top three ends return in Adam Carriker, Jay Moore and Barry Turner. They combined for 18 1/2 of the Cornhuskers' NCAA-leading 50 quarterback sacks.

## LINEBACKER

### Best: Nebraska

(Key players)

Stewart Bradley	6-4, 245	Sr.
Corey McKeon	6-1, 225	Jr.
Steve Octavien	6-0, 240	Jr.
Bo Ruud	6-3, 230	Jr.

Bradley, Octavien and Ruud all were sidelined by injuries for the Alamo Bowl. Octavien didn't finish the first half of his first game as a Cornhusker, but big things are expected of him. Though McKeon is small for the middle, you wouldn't know it from his statistics: 98 tackles, including 22 for losses, seven sacks, 11 quarterback hurries, three interceptions, one fumble forced and one recovered. Add junior Lance Brandenburgh and sophomore Phillip Dillard to the list and Nebraska is two-deep.

### Rest

Oklahoma is a close second, if not deserving of first in the evaluation, with the return of dynamic duo Rufus Alexander and Zach Latimer. They combined for 186 tackles, including 20 for losses and nine sacks. Texas is right there as well. The Longhorns are young. Sophomore Rashad Bobino and junior Robert Killibrew return, with freshmen Sergio Kindle and Rodrick Muckelroy in the mix. The 6-4, 225-pound Kindle, a Rivals.com five-star recruit from Woodrow Wilson High in Dallas, enrolled at mid-year and went through spring practice. Muckelroy redshirted last season.

## SECONDARY

### Best: Oklahoma

(Key players)

Reggie Smith	6-1, 190	So.
D.J. Wolfe	5-11, 196	Jr.
Lewis Baker	6-3, 203	Jr.
Darien Williams	5-10, 197	Jr.
Marcus Walker	5-10, 197	Jr.

Five of the seven defensive backs on the Sooners' Holiday Bowl depth chart return. Smith, whom Nebraska coveted in recruiting, started the last nine games at strong safety (as a true freshman) but moved to cornerback in the spring, joining Wolfe to give the Sooners a talented tandem. Wolfe, a converted running back, was the team's third-leading tackler and led in pass break-ups with 10. He and Smith each intercepted two passes. Williams also started the Holiday Bowl at free safety. With a year's experience, and a push from an outstanding front seven, the Sooner secondary could be outstanding. Walker underwent surgery during the spring and his status for the fall is uncertain.

### Rest

Texas ranked fourth nationally in pass efficiency defense and eighth in pass defense. Even though Thorpe Award winner Michael Huff and Cedric Griffin are gone, the Longhorns have plenty of talent. Tarrell Brown and Michael Griffin return and both are post-season honors candidates, at cornerback and safety respectively. Griffin was the leading tackler with an even 100. Aaron Ross, a top punt returner, also is an experienced cornerback. He and Griffin tied for the team lead with three interceptions apiece. Baylor has two outstanding corners in C.J. Wilson and Anthony Arline. Wilson and Arline were among those tied for the conference lead with five interceptions.

## KICKING

### Best: Colorado

(Key players)

Mason Crosby	6-2, 210	Sr.
Stephone Robinson	5-9, 185	Jr.



Crosby

Crosby gives Colorado the edge even though the Buffaloes have to replace first-team all-conference punter John Torp — a job that could be Crosby's as well, if he can juggle it with his place-kicking and kickoffs. Place-kicking, of course, is his first concern. "Any time you get the ball on your side of the 50, Mason is capable of putting points on the board," said new coach Dan Hawkins. Crosby led the team in scoring last season and was successful on 21-of-28 field goal attempts, averaging a nation-best 41.2 yards, an average helped by his making five of 50 yards or longer. Hawkins is looking for ways to get the ball in Robinson's hands.

### Rest

The Kansas kicking duo of Kyle Tucker and Scott Webb ranks among the most reliable in the conference. Tucker averaged 42.9 yards per punt while Webb made 14-of-19 field goals and 27-of-29 extra-point kicks. Baylor's Daniel Sepulveda is the Big 12's premier punter, when healthy. There's the rub. He suffered an ACL injury in a pickup basketball game and might miss the season, although he has vowed to return by the Bears' Sept. 2 opener. Texas has the league's top punt returner in Aaron Ross. Texas Tech kicker Alex Trlica has made 115 extra-point kicks during his career, without a miss.



# HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED

## First Team

### OFFENSE

Pos.	Player	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
WR	Todd Blythe	6-5	210	Jr.	Iowa State
WR	Joel Filani	6-3	222	Sr.	Texas Tech
WR	Jarrett Hicks	6-3	210	Sr.	Texas Tech
TE	Martin Rucker	6-5	245	Jr.	Missouri
OL	Justin Blalock	6-4	329	Sr.	Texas
OL	Manuel Ramirez	6-4	339	Sr.	Texas Tech
OL	Mark Fenton	6-4	295	Sr.	Colorado
OL	Kasey Studdard	6-3	305	Sr.	Texas
OL	Aaron Brant	6-7	320	Sr.	Iowa State
QB	Zac Taylor	6-2	210	Sr.	Nebraska
RB	Adrian Peterson	6-2	218	Jr.	Oklahoma
RB	Jamaal Charles	6-1	190	So.	Texas
PK	Mason Crosby	6-2	210	Sr.	Colorado
KR	DeAndre Jackson	6-0	192	Sr.	Iowa State

### DEFENSE

DL	Adam Carriker	6-6	295	Sr.	Nebraska
DL	Frank Okam	6-5	315	Jr.	Texas
DL	Brent Curvey	6-0	295	Sr.	Iowa State
DL	C.J. Ah You	6-4	265	Sr.	Oklahoma
LB	Rufus Alexander	6-1	231	Sr.	Oklahoma
LB	Thaddeus Washington	5-11	240	Sr.	Colorado
LB	Corey McKeon	6-1	225	Jr.	Nebraska
DB	DeAndre Jackson	6-0	192	Sr.	Iowa State
DB	Reggie Smith	6-1	190	So.	Oklahoma
DB	Michael Griffin	6-0	205	Sr.	Texas
DB	David Overstreet	6-0	210	Sr.	Missouri
P	Daniel Sepulveda	6-3	227	Sr.	Baylor
PR	Aaron Ross	6-1	192	Sr.	Texas



# PRESEASON All-Big 12

## Second Team

### OFFENSE

Pos.	Player	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
WR	Dominique Zeigler	6-3	180	Sr.	Baylor
WR	D'Juan Woods	6-1	210	Sr.	Oklahoma State
WR	Nate Swift	6-2	195	So.	Nebraska
TE	Matt Herian	6-5	240	Sr.	Nebraska
OL	Corey Hilliard	6-5	310	Sr.	Oklahoma State
OL	Lyle Sendlein	6-5	305	Sr.	Texas
OL	Brian Daniels	6-4	300	Sr.	Colorado
OL	David Ochoa	6-4	285	Sr.	Kansas
OL	Chris Messner	6-6	280	Sr.	Oklahoma
QB	Bret Meyer	6-3	208	Jr.	Iowa State
RB	Mike Hamilton	6-1	215	So.	Oklahoma State
RB	Jon Cornish	6-0	205	Sr.	Kansas
PK	Jordan Congdon	5-11	175	So.	Nebraska
KR	Yamon Figurs	6-0	180	Sr.	Kansas State

### DEFENSE

DL	Tim Crowder	6-4	270	Sr.	Texas
DL	Red Bryant	6-4	330	Jr.	Texas A&M
DL	Chris Hudler	6-3	290	Sr.	Texas Tech
DL	Calvin Thibodeaux	6-1	251	Sr.	Oklahoma
LB	Keyunta Dawson	6-2	260	Sr.	Texas Tech
LB	Justin Warren	6-3	237	Sr.	Texas A&M
LB	Brandon Archer	6-2	225	Sr.	Kansas State
DB	Aqib Talib	6-2	180	So.	Kansas
DB	D.J. Wolfe	5-11	196	Jr.	Oklahoma
DB	J.J. Billingsley	5-11	185	Sr.	Colorado
DB	C.J. Wilson	6-1	195	Sr.	Baylor
P	Kyle Tucker	6-2	205	Jr.	Kansas
PR	Stephone Robinson	5-9	185	Jr.	Colorado



# NORTH



**Colorado**



**Iowa State**



**Kansas**



**Kansas State**



**Missouri**



**Nebraska**

Sept. 2	Montana State	Toledo*	Northwestern State	Illinois State	Murray State	Louisiana Tech
Sept. 9	@Colorado State	UNLV	Florida International	Florida Atlantic	Mississippi State	Nicholls State
Sept. 16	Arizona State	@Iowa	@Toledo**	Marshall	@New Mexico	@USC
Sept. 23	@Georgia	@Texas	South Florida	Louisville	Ohio	Troy
Sept. 30	@Missouri	Northern Iowa	@Nebraska	@Baylor	Colorado	Kansas
Oct. 7	Baylor	Nebraska	Texas A&M	Oklahoma State	@Texas Tech	@Iowa State
Oct. 14	Texas Tech	@Oklahoma	Oklahoma State	Nebraska	@Texas A&M	@Kansas State
Oct. 21	@Oklahoma	Texas Tech	@Baylor	@Missouri	Kansas State	Texas
Oct. 28	@Kansas	@Kansas State	Colorado	Iowa State	Oklahoma	@Oklahoma State
Nov. 4	Kansas State	Kansas	@Iowa State	@Colorado	@Nebraska	Missouri
Nov. 11	Iowa State	@Colorado	idle	Texas	idle	@Texas A&M
Nov. 18	idle	Missouri	Kansas State	@Kansas	@Iowa State	idle
Nov. 25	@Nebraska***	idle	@Missouri	idle	Kansas	Colorado***

# 2006 Big 12 SCHEDULES

# SOUTH



**Baylor**



**Oklahoma**



**Oklahoma St.**



**Texas**



**Texas A&M**



**Texas Tech**

Sept. 2	TCU	Alabama-Birmingham	Missouri State	North Texas	Citadel	SMU
Sept. 9	Northwestern State	Washington	@Arkansas State	Ohio State	Louisiana Lafayette	@UTEP
Sept. 16	@Washington State	@Oregon	Florida Atlantic	@Rice	Army (San Antonio)	@TCU
Sept. 23	Army	Middle Tennessee St.	@Houston	Iowa State	Louisiana Tech	SE Louisiana
Sept. 30	Kansas State	Idle	idle	Sam Houston State	Texas Tech	@Texas A&M
Oct. 7	@Colorado	Texas	@Kansas State	@Oklahoma	@Kansas	Missouri
Oct. 14	@Texas	Iowa State	@Kansas	Baylor	Missouri	@Colorado
Oct. 21	Kansas	Colorado	Texas A&M	@Nebraska	@Oklahoma State	@Iowa State
Oct. 28	Texas A&M	@Missouri	Nebraska	@Texas Tech	@Baylor	Texas
Nov. 4	@Texas Tech	@Texas A&M	@Texas	Oklahoma State	Oklahoma	Baylor
Nov. 11	@Oklahoma State	Texas Tech	Baylor	@Kansas State	Nebraska	@Oklahoma
Nov. 18	Oklahoma	@Baylor	@Texas Tech	idle	idle	Oklahoma State
Nov. 25	idle	@Oklahoma State	Oklahoma	Texas A&M***	@Texas***	idle

\*Thursday, Aug. 31.

\*\*Friday, Sept. 15.

\*\*\*Friday, Nov. 24.



# **NONCONFERENCE** **OPPONENTS**



The historic Los Angeles Coliseum will be filled with fans when Nebraska and USC meet for just the third time Sept. 16. ABC Sports and the Pac-10 Conference have announced that the game will be televised nationally on ABC, with kickoff set for 7 p.m. CDT and 5 p.m. locally in Los Angeles. The game will mark the first meeting between the two storied programs since 1970, when the Huskers and Trojans battled to a 21-21 tie at the Coliseum. In the only other meeting, USC won at Nebraska in the 1969 season.

**Sept. 2**  
**Sept. 9**  
**Sept. 16**  
**Sept. 23**

**Louisiana Tech**  
**Nicholls State**  
**@USC**  
**Troy**

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# LOUISIANA TECH BULLDOGS

Sept. 2, Lincoln

**A**fter guiding last year's veteran Louisiana Tech team to its best season since 1999, Bulldogs eighth-year coach Jack Bicknell couldn't be blamed for feeling like he's starting back at square one.

Tech returns just nine starters — only two on defense — from a 7-4 team that finished tied for third in the Western Athletic Conference in 2005.

"Truthfully, it's a brand new team," Bicknell said. "The team that went out and did that isn't here any more. We are a much younger team that has to learn to do what that team did."

Still, Bicknell is optimistic that last year's success will carry over to this season.

"It gives the guys a feeling that we are one of the better teams in the WAC, and it gives us an attitude that we should be contending every year which we should be," Bicknell said. "I think it certainly helps as your team understands what it takes to be successful."

"It is certainly better than not having any success."

Success is something Bicknell has enjoyed at least a taste of during his first seven seasons in Ruston, La. Although he is 40-42 with the Bulldogs, Bicknell's 40 victories tie him for third all-time in Louisiana Tech's history.

Bicknell was named WAC coach of the year in 2001 after guiding his team to a 7-5 record (7-1 in conference games) in Louisiana Tech's first year in the conference. The Bulldogs also earned a bid to the Humanitarian Bowl, marking the program's first post-season appearance since 1990.

In Bicknell's first season (1999), Tech was 8-3 and earned the program's first Associated Press top-25 ranking. The highlight of the season was a 29-28 victory over eventual Southeastern Conference champion Alabama.

Battling top-level competition has been a trait of Bicknell-coached teams. The Bulldogs, who play at Nebraska on Sept. 2, have faced 24 BCS-conference oppo-

nents, 20 top-25 opponents and played 31 games against foes that qualified for bowl games.

Things will be no different this season as Tech will play non-conference games at Nebraska, Texas A&M and Clemson. Unfortunately for the Bulldogs, they'll be trying to break in a bevy of new players during those early-season games.

Tech is most experienced on offense where seven starters return. The bad news is Bicknell's squad must find a replacement for two-year starting quarterback Matt Kubik, who passed for 2,200 yards and 18 touchdowns last year.

The top candidates for the job — juniors Zac Champion and Joe Danna and redshirt freshman Michael Mosley — have thrown a combined total of eight passes in a Division I-A game.

"I'm extremely happy with our three quarterbacks — all of them can play," Bicknell said. "I really believe that. It's a situation where I feel like quarterback isn't a position I'm worried about."

Mosley redshirted in 2005 during his true freshman season. Danna signed with Tech in December after a two-year career at Blinn (Texas) Junior College. Bicknell said he doesn't intend to name a starter until the week before the season opener against Nebraska.

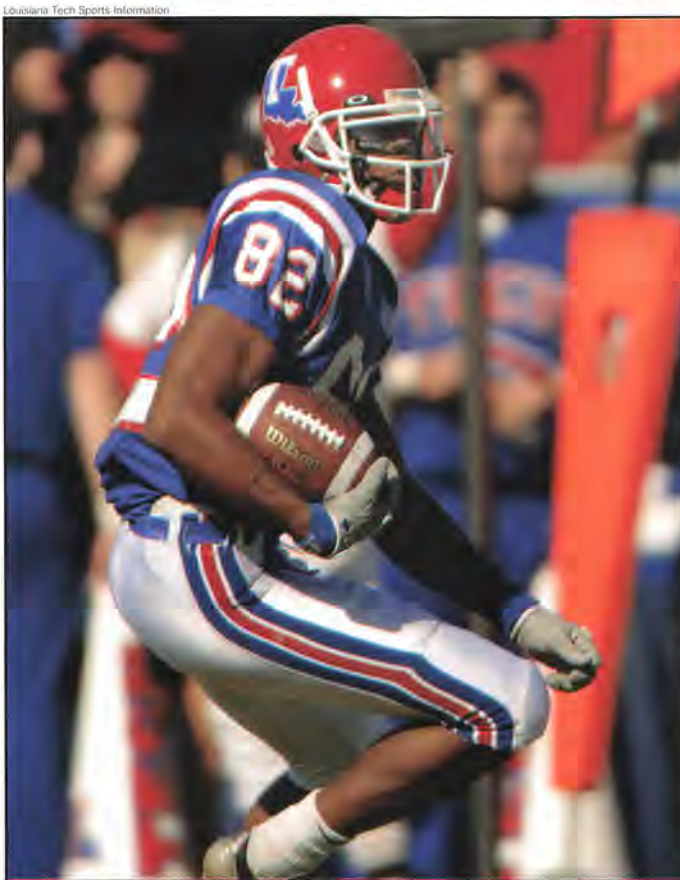
"I think Zac has an edge because of his understanding of the offense but it's not a clear-cut situation," Bicknell said. "The other two guys both have talent and just need more

time to show what they can do.

"I think it's only fair to give all three guys a chance heading into the fall. I would love to be able to name someone now but not at the expense of making a mistake."

Whoever emerges at quarterback will have an experienced group of receivers to throw to. Senior wide receivers Eric Newman and Johnathan Holland return as the team's top two pass-catchers. Newman led the team with 30 receptions for 566 yards and eight TDs, while Holland had 29 receptions for 421 yards.

Tech is also stacked at tight end with senior Anthony



Senior wide receiver Eric Newman led the Bulldogs with 30 catches for 566 yards and eight touchdowns.



James and sophomore Anthony Harrison. Bicknell regards James as one of his best blocking tight ends he's had a Tech and the 6-foot-6, 270-pounder can catch the ball (15 receptions for 201 yards) as well.

The Bulldogs were also deep at running back last season as Mark Dillard, Freddie Franklin and Patrick Jackson combined for nearly 1,500 yards rushing and 18 TDs.

Franklin and Jackson were the team's top two backs in the spring, while Dillard missed spring drills after being arrested in January after a female student filed a complaint against him. However, a grand jury refused to indict Dillard on rape charges. If he returns to the team, Dillard will likely be moved to safety.

There are also two big gaps to fill on the offensive line as Tech lost three-time All-WAC guard Aaron Lips and three-

year starting center Marcus Stewart to graduation. However, Bicknell is confident the Bulldogs can build around returning starters in Tyler Miller and Ryan Considine at the tackle spots and Marcus Lindsey at guard.

The biggest concern for Bicknell is his defense, which lost nine starters. The only starters returning are linebacker Brannon Jackson and strong safety Dez Abrams. Bicknell said he also regards junior defensive lineman Josh Muse as a returning starter after seeing significant playing time last year.

"It's a big concern," Bicknell said of his youthful defensive unit. "We're

Senior safety Dez Abrams will be asked to lead a young secondary.

young. We are going to be playing a lot of newcomers — guys who are new to the program.

"That doesn't necessarily mean we won't be good. We are going to be relying on young guys. It's as simple as that."

Tech made an effort to get Jackson, the team's third-leading tackler last year, some immediate help. Junior college recruit Chris Lowery and freshman Leonard Powell will be counted on to produce right away, while Tim Reddick, Thomas Washington, Terence Alexander, Chad Beverage and Anthony Crosby should all battle for starting spots.

Abrams will be asked to lead a secondary that lost star cornerback Tramon Williams, who led the country in passes defended last season with 19 (16 pass breakups and three interceptions). Weldon Brown is expected to compete for a safety spot after moving from running back and wide receiver last fall.

"We don't have a lot of players coming back, but I still believe that we have new people coming up who are great athletes that can help us," Abrams said. "It's going to be up to me and some of the older guys to really get them ready quick, but I think we can do that."

The Bulldogs will look to again be strong on special teams. Place-kicker Danny Horwedel led the WAC in field goals per game, hitting 18-of-26, and scored a team-high 88 points. Sophomore punter Chris Keagle averaged 37.4 yards per punt a year ago. ■ — By Terry Douglass



## AT A GLANCE

### STRENGTHS

Depth at running back and wide receiver is a plus for a Louisiana Tech offensive unit that will be breaking in a new quarterback. **Mark Dillard**, **Freddie Franklin** and **Patrick Jackson**, who combined to rush for nearly 1,500 yards and 18 touchdowns last year, could return, although Dillard may switch to defensive back. Also returning are leading receivers **Eric Newman** and **Johnathan Holland**.

### QUESTION MARKS

After riding a veteran-laden team to a 7-4 finish and tying for third in the WAC with a 6-2 mark, Louisiana Tech will have one of its youngest teams in **Jack Bicknell's** eighth years as head coach. Only nine starters return for the Bulldogs, including just two on defense.

### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Place-kicker **Danny Horwedel** led in the WAC in scoring and field goals per game, hitting 18-of-26 attempts and led Louisiana Tech with 88 points. He was named to the Lou Groza Award watch list and was a second-team All-WAC selection.

### IMPRESSIVE SLATE

Nonconference road games at Nebraska, Texas A&M and Clemson and a nationally televised home contest against Fresno State highlight Tech's 13-game schedule. Tech's slate, which features the most regular season games in the program's 100-plus year history, includes five contests against 2005 bowl participants.

### MEMORIAL MEMORIES

Louisiana Tech will open the season at Nebraska, playing the Cornhuskers in Memorial Stadium — site of one of Tech's most memorable games. In its 56-27 loss to Nebraska in 1998, quarterback **Tim Rattay** and wide receiver **Troy Edwards** combined to shatter numerous school and NCAA marks. Rattay was 46-of-68 passing for 590 yards and four touchdowns against the Huskers, while Edwards had 21 receptions for 405 yards, including scoring catches of 52, 94 and 80 yards.

### 2005 RECORD: 7-4 CONFERENCE FINISH: 6-2

S 10	@Florida	L, 41-3
S 17	@Kansas	L, 34-14
O 1	New Mexico State	W, 34-14
O 8	Hawaii	W, 46-14
O 15	@Nevada	L, 37-27
O 22	North Texas	W, 40-14
O 29	San Jose State	W, 31-14
N 5	@Utah State	W, 27-17
N 12	@Idaho	W, 41-38
N 26	Boise State	L, 30-13
D 2	@Fresno State	W, 40-28

## TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	<b>Johnathan Holland</b>	6-0 189 Sr.	DE	Sammie Collins	6-3 249 Sr.
	Roderick Handy	6-1 210 Jr.		Mark Cassimere	6-3 246 Fr.
LT	<b>Tyler Miller</b>	6-7 309 Jr.	NT	Josh Muse	6-3 310 Jr.
	Ryan Snell	6-5 282 So.		Breon Jackson	6-3 310 So.
LG	David Accardo	6-5 316 So.	DT	Wes Day	6-4 249 So.
	Ben Harris	6-4 281 So.		Ben McGilton	6-3 236 Jr.
C	Jacob Peeler	6-3 261 Sr.	SLB	Quin Harris	6-3 221 So.
	Jason Lewis	6-4 309 So.		Tim Reddick	6-3 227 Jr.
RG	<b>Marcus Lindsey</b>	6-7 386 Sr.	MLB	<b>Brannon Jackson</b>	6-2 263 Jr.
	Dwight Alexander	6-5 300 Fr.		Chris Lowery	6-2 226 Jr.
RT	<b>Ryan Considine</b>	6-5 297 Jr.	BLB	Anthony Crosby	6-0 227 Jr.
	Jason Gooch	6-6 278 Jr.		Chad Beverage	6-0 227 So.
TE	<b>Anthony James</b>	6-6 265 Sr.	WLB	Marquis Spurgeon	6-0 187 Sr.
	Anthony Harrison	6-3 225 So.		Marvin Lubin	6-1 200 So.
WR	<b>Eric Newman</b>	6-0 187 Sr.	DOG	Deon Young	5-11 191 Fr.
	Earl Griffin	6-0 207 Jr.		Weldon Brown	5-10 180 So.
WR	Josh Wheeler	6-4 200 So.	FS	<b>Dez Abrams</b>	6-0 189 Sr.
	Shane Womack	6-0 206 So.		Justin Johnson	6-0 197 So.
QB	Zac Champion	6-1 215 Jr.	BC	Sandy Ray Collins	5-10 187 Sr.
	Michael Mosley	6-1 202 Fr.		Les Brown	5-10 192 Jr.
RB	<b>Freddie Franklin</b>	6-0 178 Jr.	FC	Anthony Moss	5-10 183 Sr.
	Patrick Jackson	5-10 192 So.		Torrance Hampton	5-9 169 Sr.
PK	<b>Danny Horwedel</b>	6-2 200 Jr.	P	<b>Chris Keagle</b>	5-11 225 So.

Returning starters in bold



# NICHOLLS STATE COLONELS

Sept. 9, Lincoln

**O**n Sept. 9, option football will return to Nebraska. No, Cornhuskers' Coach Bill Callahan isn't scrapping the West Coast offense in favor of Nebraska's former system. Instead, it will be NCAA Division I-AA Nicholls State (La.) that will bring its triple-option offensive attack to Lincoln.

"We're old-school — some of those Nebraska fans ought to love us," Nicholls State coach Jay Thomas said with a laugh. "We went to it about six years ago, and we've had some success with it, and we've been able to recruit to that offense with the type of kids we've been able to get."

Last season, Nicholls State was highly successful with its option-based running game. The Colonels ranked second in the country in I-AA, averaging 364.8 yards per game, while posting a 6-4 record and winning the program's first Southland Conference title since joining the league in the early 1990s.

"This offense has just given us an opportunity to get the ballgame to the fourth quarter and have a chance to win the game," said Thomas, who is entering his third season as Nicholls State's head coach and his 11th year at the school overall. "We try to play solid defense, be sound in our kicking game, and with our offense, we try to run as much time off that clock as we can."

No kidding. Last season, Nicholls State attempted just 67 passes in 10 games.

While the triple option scheme employed by Nicholls State differs from the I-formation option game Nebraska used for many years, Thomas said he did study how the Huskers executed their option attack. Former NU option quarterback Mickey Joseph was even a former quarterbacks coach for the Colonels.

Joseph took part in a pair of Orange Bowls as well as a Fiesta Bowl and Citrus Bowl during his career at Nebraska. He captained the Huskers during his senior

season of 1991.

"Mickey was our quarterbacks coach here, so we had some of those tapes of back when he was at Nebraska," Thomas said. "It gave our team some things to look at."

Thomas said that playing at Nebraska this fall represents a new high-water mark as far as nationally recognizable opponents go for Nicholls State. Last year, the Colonels lost 35-31 in their season opener at Indiana, which represented the program's biggest "name" opponent to date.

"That was our biggest step up ever here at Nicholls State," Thomas said of playing the Hoosiers. "We've played some really good I-A programs — North Texas, South Florida, Arkansas State — in the past, and last year we stepped up and played Indiana."

"Of course, this year with Nebraska, it's a whole different world for us. We don't know exactly what we've gotten ourselves into, but I guess we're going to find out. Nebraska is probably the most accomplished opponent Nicholls State has ever played. Our players are fully aware of the Husker tradition."

Thomas said the value of playing a traditional power like Nebraska is two-fold. First, it provides a big recruiting boost. Second, it will bring forth a financial windfall that Thomas said all I-AA programs need to survive. In fact, Nicholls

State will play two I-A opponents this season, also taking on Louisiana Tech.

Nicholls State opens its season Sept. 3 at Southern Arkansas. On Sept. 9, the Colonels will trek from their campus in Thibodaux, La., to play Nebraska at Lincoln.

"Certainly, this game is going to be a huge challenge for our guys," Thomas said. "But our approach is that our first game is against Southern Arkansas, so that's our main concern — getting ready for those guys — and then we'll have to worry about Nebraska the next week."

In the big scheme of things, Thomas' chief concern is



**All-Southland Conference running back Joseph Tobias rushed for 718 yards and seven touchdowns.**



defending the Colonels' Southland Conference title.

"Right now, it's really hard to say what kind of team we're going to have," Thomas said. "We'll just have to wait until August, and we'll see.

"Clearly the schedule is a challenge for our young team, but the team needs to understand that expectations are always higher following a championship season."

Because of everything Colonels players had to endure last season, Thomas said winning a conference title had added meaning.

"Last year, we dealt with two storms early on and a number of our players' parents lost everything — homes and all — and it really just turned everything upside down," Thomas said. "For our guys to come out of that and win a conference championship — the first ever here at Nicholls State since they've been in the Southland Conference — says a lot about them.

"We went through so much with our team the last few years that we're hoping for a normal season."

In this case, "normal" would also include attempting to rebuild a defense that must replace seven starters.

"We've got a big chore ahead of us," Thomas said. "We're going to have a lot of young guys playing and a lot of new faces defensively.

We lost three of the four secondary guys and three of the four guys up front, so we've got a number of holes.

"We've got some guys capable of doing it, but still, we're going to need some help defensively."

Cory Vavala, who was the leading tackler for Nicholls State last season with 85 total stops, returns to his starting spot at middle linebacker, along with strongside linebacker Levon Bailey. Defensive tackle Greg Casnave and safety Tony Edison also return as starters.

Nicholls State returns six starters on offense, including running back Joseph Tobias. The senior-to-be had a team-leading 718 yards rushing last year with seven touchdowns, earning conference newcomer of the year honors.

Fullback Broderick Cole (717 yards rushing and 13 TDs) will also be back in the backfield. Up front, three starters return, including All-Southland honorees in tackle Jacob Bender and guard Benjamin Gombossy.

Thomas said the Colonels made significant progress in spring practice and that he's looking forward to continuing the process in fall camp.

"I really think we made some huge strides, particularly in the knowledge of the game and learning our scheme and technique," Thomas said. "We tried to slow things down, offensively and defensively, and focus on areas within the kicking game.

"As a whole, we got better on knowing we had to get done, in every phase of the game, and us having a better knowledge of what we have to do."

— By Terry Douglass



Dwight Knepp/Nicholls State University

**All-conference linebacker Cory Vavala has led the Colonels in tackles the last two seasons.**



## AT A GLANCE

### STRENGTHS

Nicholls State expects to return several key performers that helped the program rank second among NCAA Division I-AA teams in rushing offense, averaging 364.8 yards per game. The Colonels will welcome back leading rushers **Joseph Tobias** (718 yards) and **Broderick Cole** (717 yards) as well as three starters on the offensive line. Tobias, a transfer from Southwest Mississippi Community College, was named Southland Conference Newcomer of the Year.

### QUESTION MARKS

The defense, period. First-year coordinator **Steve Ellis** has the difficult task for replacing seven starters from last year's unit. The Colonels lost three of four starters on the defensive line and the secondary. Coach **Jay Thomas** said he'd also like to see significant improvement in the kicking game.

### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Linebacker **Cory Vavala** led Nicholls State defensively as a junior last year with 85 total tackles, including 45 solo stops. He also had four tackles for loss, four interceptions, three pass breakups and forced two fumbles.

### PLAYOFF PARTICIPANTS

Third-ranked Furman ended Nicholls State's run in last year's NCAA Division I-AA playoffs with a 14-12 first-round victory over the No. 21-ranked Colonels in Paladin Stadium in Greenville, S.C. Nicholls State finished 6-4 on the season, but won its first-ever Southland Conference title with a 5-1 record in league play. Thomas was named the conference coach of the year in just his second year in charge of the Colonels.

### ABOUT NICHOLLS STATE

Located in Thibodaux, La., Nicholls State has an enrollment of 6,504 and was founded in 1948. The school colors are red and gray, and the Colonels are members of the Southland Conference. NSU's Guidry Stadium has a capacity of 12,800.

### 2005 RECORD: 6-4 CONFERENCE FINISH: 5-1

S 10	@Indiana	L, 35-
S 17	Cheyney University	W, 56-
O 1	@North Dakota St.	L, 26-
O 8	@Stephen F. Austin	L, 27-
O 15	Sam Houston St.	W, 37-
O 29	Texas State	W, 32-
N 5	@Northwestern St.	W, 31-
N 12	@Southeastern La.	W, 38-
N 19	McNeese State	W, 39-
N 26	@Furman	L, 14-

## TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Patrick Gordon	6-6	195	So.	DE	Matt Fairchild	6-2	260	So.
	Jamal Simmons	6-2	200	Fr.		Chris Noble	6-3	255	So.
LT	<b>Jacob Bender</b>	6-6	305	Sr.	DT	<b>Greg Casnave</b>	6-3	280	Sr.
	Jerry Sevin	6-3	305	Jr.		Tremell Jack	6-3	300	Sr.
LG	<b>Ben Gombossy</b>	6-1	280	Jr.	DT	Milan Mistic	6-2	295	So.
	Aric Flowers	6-2	280	So.		Tracey Howard	6-0	285	So.
C	Nigel Cormier	6-1	260	So.	DE	Kyle Freeman	6-2	225	Sr.
	Jonathan DeAvila	6-3	255	Jr.		Chris Noble	6-3	255	So.
RG	<b>Jesse Frazier</b>	6-3	305	Jr.	SLB	<b>Levon Bailey</b>	6-2	190	Jr.
	Jake Housson	6-2	290	Sr.		Louis Vaughn	6-1	223	Jr.
RT	Davonn Dutton	6-2	265	So.	MLB	<b>Cory Vavala</b>	6-2	225	Sr.
	Torey McKenzie	6-2	295	Sr.		Robert Ellis	6-2	230	Jr.
TE	<b>Jared Landrum</b>	6-2	245	Jr.	WLB	Dustin Gisleair	6-0	210	Jr.
	Chase Martin	6-1	235	So.		Ivan Perry	6-1	215	Jr.
WR	<b>Kenley Horton</b>	6-2	170	Sr.	CB	Jermaine Boggan	5-10	180	Jr.
	Michael Okoronkwo	6-4	215	So.		Nick Reasons	6-0	195	Jr.
QB	Vincent Montgomery	5-11	195	So.	CB	Marques Lewis	5-9	188	Sr.
	Brandon Zackery	6-0	190	So.		Morrell Carter	5-11	170	So.
RB	Zach Morgan	5-9	190	So.	FS	David Wise	6-1	210	So.
	DeMarko Hutchinson	5-7	185	Jr.		Jordan Ogletree	5-10	190	So.
FB	<b>Broderick Cole</b>	5-11	230	Jr.	SS	<b>Tony Edison</b>	6-0	205	Sr.
	Joseph Tobias	5-11	220	Sr.		Damarus Hall	5-9	190	Sr.
PK	<b>Ross Schexnayder</b>	5-10	175	So.	P	<b>Sean Comeaux</b>	5-10	165	Jr.

Returning starters in bold



# SOUTHERN CAL TROJANS

Sept. 16, Los Angeles

**D**on't cry for Southern California Coach Pete Carroll and his Trojans just yet.

Despite losing several marquee players, including a pair of Heisman Trophy winners in the backfield, it might be a bit presumptuous to assume that Carroll's cupboard is bare. Especially when you consider that the Trojans have won 45 of their last 47 games and have landed four straight recruiting classes that have ranked in the top five nationally.

Sure, replacing star players like quarterback Matt Leinart and Reggie Bush is a difficult task, but to Carroll, the situation seems strangely familiar.

"There's no denying we lost a lot of outstanding players from the 2005 team, especially on offense, but this is not an unfamiliar situation for us," Carroll said. "It has the feel of the 2003 season, when we lost Carson (Palmer) and Troy (Polamalu) and all those running backs. We regrouped and had a real nice season."

In that case, "real nice" was a 12-1 record and a share of the national title in 2004. Southern Cal followed with another national championship in 2005 and ran its winning streak to 34 games before getting upset by Texas in the Rose Bowl.

On the surface, it would appear Carroll has his work cut out for him to repeat USC's previous reloading project. Just 11 starters return this fall, including four on offense, six on defense and a place-kicker.

"That's the challenge each year in college football — how well you can replace good players," Carroll said. "We've shown that we're very capable of doing that. I don't see it being any different this season."

Retooling the Trojans' potent offense appears to be Carroll's most pressing concern. Not only did USC lose a 3,800-yard passer in Leinart and a 1,700-yard rusher in Bush, but also gone are 1,300-yard rusher LenDale White

and three starters on the offensive line.

"No doubt, we'll come into 2006 a little unsure of our offense," Carroll said. "But we have great confidence in the players and coaches on this side of the ball. We set some high standards last year, and it will be fun to go after them this season."

The bright spot would be the receiving corps, which features arguably the best one-two punch in the country with Dwayne Jarrett and Steve Smith. Jarrett had 91 recep-

tions for 1,274 yards and 18 touchdowns last year, while Smith caught 60 passes for 957 yards and five scores.

"Dwayne Jarrett and Steve Smith are premier players on a national level," Carroll said. "As good as they've been here so far, we expect even better things from them in 2006."

But after the completion of spring practice, USC fans might be left wondering exactly who's going to get Jarrett and Smith the football. The Trojans expected to have a battle between two up-and-coming stars at quarterback, but John David Booty will have to recover from back surgery and Mark Sanchez was arrested for an alleged sexual assault, leaving his future status a question mark.

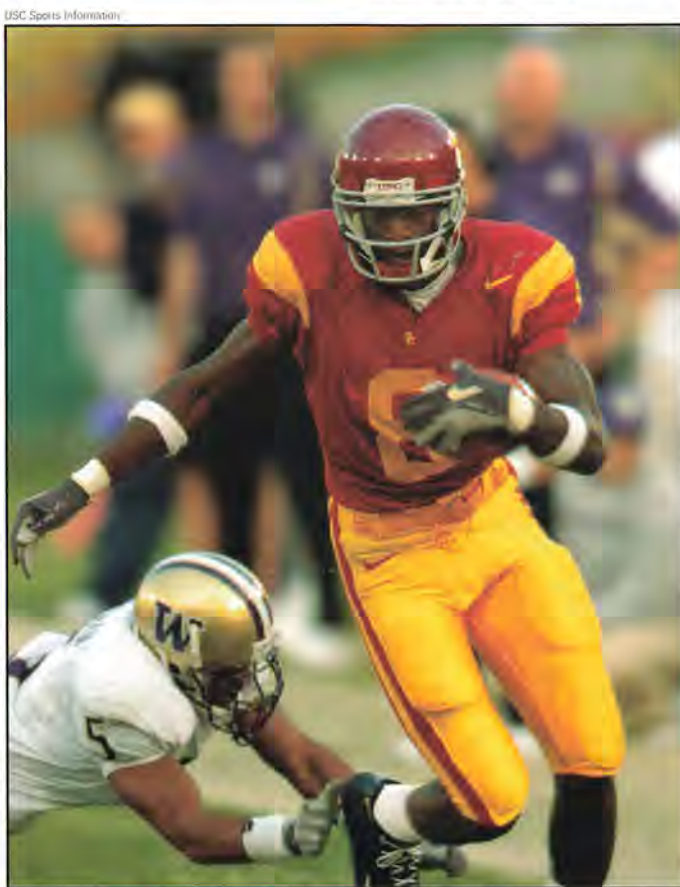
At running back, Hershel Dennis was expected to take up the slack with the departure of Bush and White, but suffered a knee injury in the spring that will probably force him to miss the 2006 season. On a positive note,

junior running back Chauncey Washington, who was academically ineligible during the spring, is expected to be eligible again in the fall.

On the offensive line, USC will try to build around left tackle Sam Baker and center Ryan Kalil.

"Sam Baker and Ryan Kalil are among the best offensive linemen in the country," Carroll said. "They are veterans and team leaders who are technically sound blockers. They form a solid nucleus for our line."

Defensively, Carroll said he has high hopes for this



USC's one-two punch at wide receiver is led by Dwayne Jarrett, who had 91 catches for 1,274 yards and 18 touchdowns.



year's unit, which was regarded as the Trojans' biggest weakness a year ago.

"We have a chance to be very good on defense this year," Carroll said. "We definitely are looking to improve on last year's showing. This is a young, fast group. We want the front seven to play well against the run and to develop a strong pass rush."

Junior defensive end Lawrence Jackson has proven to be adept at getting to the quarterback with 16 career sacks in his first two seasons, including 10 last year. The 6-foot-5, 265-pounder led the Trojans in sacks (10), forced fumbles (four) and fumble recoveries (two) last year. Junior nose tackle Sedrick Ellis also returns.

At linebacker, USC has six players returning who have started at least one game. Senior Oscar Lua (66 tackles) was the team's leading tackler from his middle linebacker

spot last year, but even he might be challenged for playing time by sophomore standout Rey Maualuga.

"This is the strength of our defense and certainly our most competitive group," Carroll said. "We have confidence in so many players. Any of them could step in and do the job. The competition level at this position will be high every day."

Safety Josh Pinkard, who started the final six games last year at cornerback, is the only returning full-time starter. Junior Terrell Thomas did start the first two games of 2005 at corner, but was cut



USC Sports Information

**Junior defensive end Lawrence Jackson had 13 tackles for losses, including 10 sacks.**

down by a season-ending knee injury.

Junior Mario Danelo, who was 11 of 12 on field-goal attempts last season, returns. The Trojans will likely have a difficult time replacing All-America punter Tom Malone as well as the kickoff and punt return abilities of Bush.

But perhaps USC's biggest offseason concerns are the legal troubles of Sanchez and investigations by the Pac-10 and NCAA into possible extra benefits provided for Jarrett and the parents of Bush.

"Kids are not perfect, and we understand this," USC athletic director Mike Garrett said in an interview with the Los Angeles Times. "That's why they're in college, to grow and make mistakes. Our biggest job is to put them back together and mend them so they learn from their mistakes and also learn from their successes."

Carroll said there's no doubt that USC's program will face additional scrutiny in the future.

"Without a doubt, we've been put into a light that challenges us," Carroll told the Associated Press. "Time will sort things out. We'll see how everything comes out. No question, people will be wondering about the program a little bit."

"I'm not going to make excuses for any part of this. I'm not going to point the finger at somebody else. I'm the one who has to continue to get this done. I've got to do a better job." ■ — *By Terry Douglass*



## AT A GLANCE

### STRENGTHS

USC is stacked at the receiver position. The Trojans have it all — size, speed, route-running ability — led by the best one-two receiving combination in the country in **Dwayne Jarrett** and **Steve Smith**. The two combined for 151 receptions and more than 2,200 yards and 21 touchdowns. Although several big-name players have moved on, coach **Pete Carroll** has been stockpiling top-rated recruiting classes.

### QUESTION MARKS

Even with the departure of **Matt Leinart** to the NFL, USC figured to be just fine at quarterback. However, **John David Booty's** struggles with a back injury and **Mark Sanchez's** arrest for an alleged sexual assault could leave the situation up in the air. Plus, the Trojans could be looking at NCAA sanctions if it turns out that NFL-bound **Reggie Bush** and/or Jarrett received extra benefits.

### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

On a team loaded with star power last year, it was easy to overlook the play of defensive end **Lawrence Jackson**. That probably won't happen this year for the All-America candidate who had 10 sacks, 13 tackles for loss, six pass breakups and four forced fumbles. Jackson has linebacker-like speed and at 6-5 and 265, he's a difficult matchup.

### FOR PETE'S SAKE

Despite last year's 41-38 loss to Texas in the national championship game, it seems there's no bigger coaching star in college football than Carroll. In five years, his record is 54-10 (.844). Not only has Carroll guided Southern Cal to two national titles (2003 and 2004), but he's also won four Pac-10 crowns.

### ROCKY OFFSEASON

USC has made plenty of headlines since losing the national championship game — and most of them haven't been the good kind. It will be interesting to see how the Trojans react to increased scrutiny that often comes along with dynasty status.

### 2005 RECORD: 12-1 CONFERENCE FINISH: 8-0

S 3	@Hawaii	W, 63-17
S 17	Arkansas	W, 70-17
S 24	@Oregon	W, 45-13
O 1	@Arizona State	W, 38-28
O 8	Arizona	W, 42-21
O 15	@Notre Dame	W, 34-31
O 22	@Washington	W, 51-24
O 29	Washington State	W, 55-13
N 5	Stanford	W, 51-21
N 12	@California	W, 35-10
N 19	Fresno State	W, 50-42
D 3	UCLA	W, 66-19
J 4	*vs. Texas	L, 41-38

\*Rose Bowl, Pasadena, Calif.

## TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

SE <b>Dwayne Jarrett</b>	6-5	210	Jr.	DE <b>Lawrence Jackson</b>	6-5	265	Jr.
Chris McFoy	6-1	200	Sr.	Alex Morrow	6-6	265	Jr.
LT <b>Sam Baker</b>	6-5	305	Jr.	NT <b>Sedrick Ellis</b>	6-1	285	Jr.
Nick Howell	6-8	265	Fr.	Travis Toffi	6-4	255	Sr.
LG Jeff Byers	6-3	300	So.	DT Chris Barrett	6-5	265	Jr.
-or- Matt Spanos	6-5	300	Jr.	Fili Moala	6-4	300	So.
C <b>Ryan Kalil</b>	6-3	285	Sr.	DE Kyle Moore	6-7	265	So.
Travis Draper	6-4	285	So.	-or- Jeff Schweigler	6-4	260	Jr.
RG Chilo Rachal	6-5	300	So.	SLB Dallas Sartz	6-5	240	Sr.
Alatini Malu	6-4	340	Jr.	Brian Cushing	6-4	235	So.
RT Kyle Williams	6-6	295	Sr.	MLB Rey Maualuga	6-3	250	So.
Charles Brown	6-6	250	Fr.	-or- <b>Oscar Lua</b>	6-1	240	Sr.
TE Fred Davis	6-4	245	Jr.	WLB <b>Keith Rivers</b>	6-3	220	Jr.
Dale Thompson	6-4	255	Jr.	Kaluka Maiava	6-0	220	So.
FL <b>Steve Smith</b>	6-0	195	Sr.	CB Kevin Thomas	6-1	190	So.
Patrick Turner	6-5	220	So.	Mozique McCurtis	6-1	225	So.
QB John David Booty	6-3	195	Jr.	FS <b>Josh Pinkard</b>	6-1	200	Jr.
Mark Sanchez	6-4	215	Fr.	Will Harris	6-2	200	So.
FB Brandon Hancock	6-1	230	Sr.	SS Kevin Ellison	6-1	220	So.
Jody Adevala	6-0	230	Jr.	Brandon Ting	5-10	180	Sr.
TB Ryan Powdrell	6-0	250	Sr.	CB Cary Harris	6-1	180	So.
Chauncey Washington	6-1	205	Jr.	-or- Terrell Thomas	6-1	195	Jr.
PK Mario Danelo	5-10	185	Jr.	P Taylor Odegard	5-9	170	So.

Returning starters in bold



# TROY TROJANS

Sept. 23, Lincoln

**W**hile taking Troy from the NCAA Division II ranks to I-AA and now I-A, veteran coach Larry Blakeney has remained true to a blueprint of heavy reliance upon a play-making defense and a solid running game.

The formula has worked well. Blakeney is 119-60-1 in 15 seasons at Troy — formerly known as Troy State.

But after ranking 113th, 111th, 112th and 109th nationally in total offense over the past four years and finishing with a 4-7 record last season, Blakeney finally decided it was time for a change. No, make that a drastic change.

With the hiring of former Kentucky assistant Tony Franklin as offensive coordinator, Troy will quickly make the transition from a ball-control offense to a no-huddle scheme that includes multiple four- and five-receiver formations and places a heavy premium on the passing game.

"We will be a no-huddle team that will throw first and run second," Franklin said in an interview with the Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser.

To get a better idea of exactly what Franklin has in mind, consider that he has worked under Hal Mumme when he was at Kentucky and with current Texas Tech coach Mike Leach. Enough said.

"The formations will be everything from two backs and two tight ends to no backs," Franklin said. "We'll adjust according to how those guys fit into the puzzle. My guess is that we will very seldom have a tight end. I think you will see three and four wide most of the time."

Franklin brought with him two other assistants familiar with the offense in offensive line coach Matt Moore and receivers coach Neal Brown. Moore and Brown will help run the aerial attack from the sideline while Franklin calls the shots from the press box.

"When we play, as the play is developing, one will watch the left side and one will watch the right side so that

they can coach on every snap," Franklin said. "There is no way to watch both sides of the field at the same time. I feel very fortunate that we have those guys."

For the new offense to be successful, Troy will rely heavily upon junior college transfer Omar Haugabook as quarterback. After passing for 2,736 yards and 23 touchdowns last fall at Dodge City (Kan.) Community College, the 6-foot-2, 220-pounder decisively won the starting quarterback position in the spring.

"There's no doubt that Omar is our guy," Franklin told the Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader. "He's by far the best quarterback we have on the team, and we've named him as our guy, and that's what we're going with. A lot of our success is going to depend on how he runs the offense and the situations he puts us in."

Haugabook, who is also a threat running the football, impressed Blakeney in the spring.

"He can make all the throws, and he is very consistent and grasped what we want to do, scheme-wise," Blakeney said. "His maturity as a football player and a person is what you want."

Despite the enthusiasm for the new system, Blakeney and Franklin aren't naïve enough to think there won't be at least some growing pains.

"Obviously, the guys we have weren't recruited

for this style of football, but we're going to be OK," Franklin said. "The guys we have are good athletes. There's no question that some of them aren't an exact fit for what we want to do, but they're making adjustments and learning to play the way we want them to play."

On the positive side of the ledger, Troy does return 10 players with at least some starting experience on the offensive side of the ball.

"The whole key to success in this offense is paying attention to details," Franklin said. "It is not about schemes in this offense because everyone runs the same

Troy Sports Information



Leodis McKelvin led Troy in all-purpose yards. He scored touchdowns on a 100-yard kickoff return and a 73-yard punt return.



plays one time or another. It is about learning how to practice, and the key to us in practice is rhythm.

"We want to practice fast because we are going to play fast. We need to maximize our reps and learn to do everything in perfect detail."

Heading into fall camp, Blakeney apparently likes what he's seen.

"I tried to hire (Franklin) a few years ago, and it didn't work out," Blakeney said. "But I'm glad it did this time."

There were also coaching changes on the defensive side at Troy. Mike Pelton and Jeremy Rowell will share the defensive coordinator position after the departure of Ricky Logo to Vanderbilt.

Pelton and Rowell will be tested early in their new roles as they must find replacements for seven defensive starters.



Troy Sports Information

**Free safety Sherrod Martin had 78 tackles, including five for losses, and two interceptions.**

Brannon Condren also return to a Trojans unit that is placing a heavy emphasis on creating more turnovers this season. Troy had just 15 takeaways in 2005 after ranking among the national leaders in turnovers forced the previous three seasons.

"When you are hustling to the ball, and you are getting a lot of guys around the ball, then you will get turnovers," Rowell said. "That is what we are going to stress — getting more people to the ball and working on getting the ball out. The interception part of it comes from the pass rush and getting people to the passer."

Perhaps another obstacle the Troy defense will have to face is taking on ground-oriented offensive attacks in the Sun Belt Conference after going up against a passing-oriented offense all week in practice — at least when facing Troy's No. 1 offense.

"We still have to concentrate on the run game to get better ourselves," Rowell said. "(Our offense is not) going to run any two-back (formations), but we have to work against two-back and tight ends because we are going to see that during the season."

"We will do some things to help ourselves in those areas. We are also going to concentrate on rushing the passer, blitzing, playing pass coverage and playing sound, fundamental football." ■

"The entire defense will be a challenge because there are so many new faces," Rowell said. "We have a whole list of folks on the depth chart who haven't played, and we are going to have to do a lot of growing up."

"It is going to be a challenge for us."

Defensive end Kenny Mainor and linebacker Marcus Richardson will be challenged with leading a front seven decimated by graduation. However, redshirt freshman linebacker Joe Baker was impressive in the spring and could make an immediate impact.

Starting safeties Sherrod Martin and



## AT A GLANCE

### STRENGTHS

With Troy finishing among the nation's bottom 10 programs in total offense the past four years, folks might be surprised to find there's plenty of optimism about what the Trojans can do with the football — at least from within the program. With new offensive coordinator **Tony Franklin** bringing in a no-huddle, pass-happy approach, Coach **Larry Blakeney's** team is certain to at least have a different look in 2006.

### QUESTION MARKS

Just like when Nebraska made the transition to the West Coast offense, the question for Troy is if there are enough quality receivers on campus to make Troy's new four- and five-receiver formations effective. The defense will also need to revamp with just four returning starters.

### DIFFERENCE-MAKER

Without having played a single down, quarterback **Omar Haugabook** is going to be the player the Trojans will count on to make their new offense successful. Despite an unorthodox throwing motion, the junior college transfer passed for 5,363 yards and 46 touchdowns in his two seasons at Dodge City (Kan.), where he was a second-team All-American.

### RECRUITING FLASHBACK

Remember back in July of 2003 when prep quarterback prospect **D.T. McDowell** had the Husker Nation abuzz with his commitment to Nebraska? As you may recall, McDowell wound up changing his mind and eventually landed at Troy. After playing half a season for the Trojans in 2004, McDowell was ruled academically ineligible last year and won't return to the program in 2006.

### SCHEDULING BRUTALITY

While Troy and other Sun Belt Conference schools have traditionally played difficult non-conference slates, the Trojans appear to be taking the philosophy to extremes. Following its home opener against Alabama State, Troy will go on the road to face Florida State, Georgia Tech and Nebraska.

### 2005 RECORD: 4-7 CONFERENCE FINISH: 3-4

S 3	Ca Poly	W, 27-10
S 10	UAB	L, 27-7
S 17	@Missouri	L, 52-21
S 24	@South Carolina	L, 45-20
O 4	@North Texas	W, 13-10
O 15	@Louisiana-Monroe	L, 27-3
O 20	Fla. International	W, 18-13
O 29	@La.-Lafayette	L, 31-28
N 5	Florida Atlantic	W, 28-14
N 12	@Arkansas State	L, 9-3
N 26	Middle Tennessee St.	L, 17-7

## TENTATIVE DEPTH CHART

WR	Josh Allen	5-11 192 Jr.	BAN	<b>Kenny Mainor</b>	6-4 216 So.
	Mario East	5-11 207 Sr.		Boo Smith	6-0 232 Sr.
LT	<b>Rob Austin</b>	6-5 267 Sr.	DT	Steve McLendon	6-4 280 Jr.
	Kenny Griffin	6-3 315 Sr.		Baron Lemar	6-5 273 Jr.
LG	<b>Chris Jamison</b>	6-3 285 So.	NT	Franklin Lloyd	6-0 283 Sr.
	Nic Riley	6-4 270 Fr.		Maurice Coleman	6-1 273 So.
C	<b>Zach Yenser</b>	6-1 280 Sr.	RE	Shawn Todd	6-3 245 Jr.
	James Gardner	6-3 311 Sr.		Junior Tagavailoa	6-2 257 Jr.
RG	<b>Kirbie Bodiford</b>	6-4 287 Sr.	SLB	<b>Marcus Richardson</b>	6-3 214 Jr.
	Danny Franks	6-4 320 Fr.		Ryan Babb	5-11 198 Sr.
RT	Will Chambliss	6-6 292 So.	MLB	Joe Baker	6-0 210 Fr.
	Seth Sutton	6-6 314 Fr.		Andre Morgan	6-1 204 Sr.
WR	Toris Rutledge	6-2 199 Sr.	WLB	Josh Maxwell	6-0 204 Jr.
	Martin Teal	6-4 207 Sr.		Romanique Lewis	6-2 225 Jr.
WR	<b>Gary Banks</b>	6-1 196 Jr.	LCB	Leodis McKelvin	5-11 187 Jr.
	Fred Turner	5-8 173 So.		Derrius Jackson	6-1 180 Jr.
QB	Omar Haugabook	6-2 220 Jr.	FS	<b>Sherrod Martin</b>	6-1 187 Jr.
	<b>Julian Foster</b>	6-2 172 So.		Tavares Williams	6-1 190 So.
HB	<b>Kenny Cattouse</b>	5-10 207 Jr.	SS	<b>Brannon Condren</b>	6-1 205 Sr.
	Xavier Walker	5-10 185 Fr.		Terence Moore	6-3 195 So.
FB	Anthony Jones	6-2 198 So.	RCB	Henry Chubb	5-11 185 So.
	<b>Sean Dawkins</b>	5-10 225 Sr.		Elbert Mack	5-10 168 Jr.
PK	<b>Greg Whibbs</b>	5-10 166 Jr.	P	Jason Wright	6-0 217 Sr.

Returning starters in bold



# **HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED PRESEASON**

- 1. Ohio State . . . Tressel locked up 'til 2012**
- 2. West Virginia . . . Mountaineers dreaming of title**
- 3. Oklahoma . . . Peterson back to frosh form**
- 4. Notre Dame . . . Weiss has the mighty Quinn**
- 5. Auburn . . . Irons the man on offense**
- 6. Florida State . . . Always talent in Tallahassee**
- 7. USC . . . Trojans play host to Huskers**
- 8. Iowa . . . Buckeyes must come to Kinnick**
- 9. Texas . . . freshman quarterback either way**
- 10. California . . . double-trouble at tailback**
- 11. Louisville . . . only if Brohm is healthy**
- 12. TCU . . . best in Mountain West again**
- 13. Florida . . . year two doing it Meyer's way**
- 14. Clemson . . . post-Whitehurst era begins**
- 15. LSU . . . Tigers at Auburn in week 3**
- 16. Oregon . . . rugged road for Ducks**



# ON TOP 25

## BCS Schedule

**Jan. 1, 2007** — Fiesta Bowl  
**Jan. 1, 2007** — Rose Bowl  
**Jan. 2, 2007** — Orange Bowl  
**Jan. 3, 2007** — Sugar Bowl  
**Jan. 8, 2007** — National  
 Championship Game (Glendale, Ariz.)

## Games of Interest

**Sept. 4** — Florida State at Miami  
**Sept. 9** — Ohio State at Texas  
**Sept. 9** — Penn State at Notre Dame  
**Sept. 16** — Nebraska at USC  
**Sept. 16** — LSU at Auburn  
**Sept. 30** — Ohio State at Iowa  
**Oct. 7** — Texas vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)  
**Oct. 14** — Florida at Auburn  
**Nov. 2** — West Virginia at Louisville  
**Nov. 18** — California at USC  
**Nov. 25** — Notre Dame at USC  
**Nov. 25** — Florida at Florida State  
**Dec. 2** — Big 12 Championship  
 (Kansas City)  
**Dec. 2** — ACC Championship  
 (Jacksonville)  
**Dec. 2** — SEC Championship (Atlanta)

## Final 2005 Ratings

Associated Press		Coaches	
Team (Record)	Points	Team (Record)	Points
1. Texas (13-0)	1,625	1. Texas (13-0)	1,550
2. USC (12-1)	1,560	2. USC (12-1)	1,483
3. Penn State (11-1)	1,484	3. Penn State (11-1)	1,421
4. Ohio State (10-2)	1,428	4. Ohio State (10-2)	1,357
5. West Virginia (11-1)	1,325	5. LSU (11-2)	1,281
6. LSU (11-2)	1,314	6. West Virginia (11-1)	1,235
7. Virginia Tech (11-2)	1,197	7. Virginia Tech (11-2)	1,176
8. Alabama (10-2)	1,081	8. Alabama (10-2)	1,066
9. Notre Dame (9-3)	1,019	9. TCU (11-1)	914
10. Georgia (10-3)	994	10. Georgia (10-3)	900
11. TCU (11-1)	937	11. Notre Dame (9-3)	866
12. Florida (9-3)	817	12. Oregon (10-2)	837
12. Oregon (10-2)	817	13. UCLA (10-2)	774
14. Auburn (9-3)	799	14. Auburn (9-3)	760
15. Wisconsin (10-3)	786	15. Wisconsin (10-3)	739
16. UCLA (10-2)	778	16. Florida (9-3)	718
17. Miami (9-3)	589	17. Boston College (9-3)	584
18. Boston College (9-3)	545	18. Miami (9-3)	558
19. Louisville (9-3)	410	19. Texas Tech (9-3)	422
20. Texas Tech (9-3)	359	20. Louisville (9-3)	342
21. Clemson (8-4)	339	21. Clemson (8-4)	310
22. Oklahoma (8-4)	329	22. Oklahoma (8-4)	274
23. Florida State (8-5)	232	23. Florida State (8-5)	209
24. Nebraska (8-4)	128	24. Nebraska (8-4)	109
25. California (8-4)	45	25. California (8-4)	68

**17. Penn State . . . Hall of Famer patrolling sideline**

**18. Texas Tech . . . receivers galore in Lubbock**

**19. Nebraska . . . here come the Huskers**

**20. Michigan . . . Hart-healthy Wolverines**

**21. Miami . . . Coker overhauls his staff**

**22. Utah . . . two QBs from whom to choose**

**23. Virginia Tech . . . no Vick at quarterback**

**24. UTEP . . . Miners dig Palmer's passing**

**25. Iowa State . . . many questions on defense**



# Early Exit

*Timely hits hard to come by as Husker baseball team bows out on home field*

**By Mike Babcock**

**T**he parking lot cleared quickly. Some got an early start. By the time Brandon Buckman grounded out to the second baseman, with Nick Jaros at second and Ryan Wehrle at first, many in the crowd of 7,144 at Hawks Field had begun working their way to the exit gates, their disappointment closed inside \$5 game programs with "2006 NCAA Division I Baseball Championship" on the cover.

The impression of a Texas player, tinted in orange, also was featured on the program's cover, in honor of the Longhorns' 2005 College World Series championship, with the rosters of 63 teams trying to prevent them from repeating as champions inside. Nebraska, of course, was among the 63.

The Cornhuskers had reason for optimism, having won three of four from Texas, including a 6-5 victory to reach the championship game of the Big 12 Tournament at Oklahoma City. They also had taken two of three from Texas at Austin in late April, 7-5 and 6-0, after a 6-2 loss.

Not that Nebraska and Texas would meet in Omaha. But the Cornhuskers had shown they could win against the nation's best, on the road. Because of that ability, they had earned a No. 6 national seed, which meant their road to Omaha would run through Lincoln, a super-regional as well as a regional.



Nebraska's only run against San Francisco came on a two-out home run by Andy Gerch (12) in the fourth inning.

They had played host to super-regionals twice before, in 2001 and 2005, and had swept through both, winning five straight to advance. So things were shaping up nicely for them, despite some struggles down the stretch in conference play, which turned a 15-3 start into a 17-10 finish.

Miami, the No. 2 regional seed, became the fan focus. No one doubted the Cornhuskers and Hurricanes would meet in the second-day winners' game and then again on Sunday in the first of a possible two championship games for the right to play the winner of a regional at Mississippi. Nebraska-Miami would be a rematch of the 2005 super-regional at Hawks Field. The Cornhuskers had won 3-1 and 6-3 to the delight of record-setting partisan crowds. Those records were certain to be broken.

What no one could have imagined when the pairings were announced — and Nebraska had

breathed a sigh of relief after earning the No. 6 national seed — was that the Cornhuskers would lose the opening game of the regional, 4-1 against fourth-seeded Manhattan. Miami was in the winners' game, after overwhelming San Francisco, which was making its first-ever NCAA Tournament appearance, 11-2.

Manhattan's Chris Cody, a senior left-hander, had befuddled Nebraska by locating pitches and relying on a change-up to which the Cornhusker batters never adjusted. Cody went the distance, yielding eight hits, walking one, hitting two — both in the third inning — and striking out seven. He threw 142 pitches, close to a season high. And he left 10 base runners stranded, six of them in scoring position. His performance needn't have been a surprise, however. He took an 11-2 record and 1.45 ERA into the game.

OK, so the Cornhuskers would have to come through the losers'





Third baseman Jake Mort makes a valiant effort, but can't come up with a foul ball that drifted into the crowd at Hawks Field.

bracket, beat San Francisco, win a Manhattan rematch, in all likelihood, and then beat Miami twice. It could be done. They had 16 comeback victories during the season, including three at the Big 12 tournament, and had rallied in the championship game against Kansas, losing 9-7 after trailing 9-2 going in the bottom of the eighth.

They hadn't been able to come back against Manhattan, which scored the only runs Cody needed with home runs on consecutive pitches to lead off the second inning. And the San Francisco game began much the same way, with the Dons scoring three unearned runs, also in the second inning.

Nebraska could manage only one run off San Francisco starter Aaron Poreda, on a two-out, fourth-inning home run by Andy Gerch. And dreams of a return to Omaha were swept away, 5-1.

Coach Mike Anderson had a difficult time expressing the emotion of the Cornhuskers' quick exit, against

a team that was making its first-ever NCAA Tournament appearance. It was "just disappointing, the results," he said during the post-game interview. "I'm not disappointed in my kids. Sitting down in that dugout, you can literally feel what this team . . ." He paused, trying to collect his thoughts.

"I'm not talking about results, but I'm talking about what this team is about. They did not want to finish. They did not want this to end. We just didn't get the results that we wanted."

Anderson was asked if his team, which was coming off a College World Series appearance, had created unrealistic expectations by over-achieving early in the season. The Cornhuskers won 17 of their first 19 games. "I really believed we had a group, and I'll say it from the beginning to the end, we had some young men in this program that were talented players that were inexperienced," he said.

Eighteen of the 27 players on the

roster for the Big 12 Tournament were freshmen or sophomores and only three were seniors: Buckman, Jeff Christy and Brett Jensen.

"And I think the inexperience, in the end, hurt us. When I say inexperience, I'm talking about championship-level baseball. That's just one of those things. I've seen it from the good side. I've seen it from the bad. We've taken advantage of it before on one side and been taken advantage of on the other, so it's all quite a process to try to get our kids up to that point," said Anderson.

The team's inability to hit in critical situations, a late-season shortcoming, was a result of getting "a little hesitant," Anderson said. "But our kids kept trying to fight through it. You could see it by the fact that we'd get a base knock, we'd have a good at-bat, and we just couldn't get it done, couldn't get the timely hit. Those stretches happen. We just don't want them to happen late in the year."

Again, the championship-level



inexperience was a factor. "As fun as the first half of this year was, I anticipated there being some time that we would experience some adversity," he said. "Looking back, I wish we would have had more because I think it would have made this team grow a little bit more. We experienced a lot of success with some inexperienced kids early. And that's the growth process."

Though disappointing and frustrating, the team's late-season struggles did not represent the program's taking a step back, Anderson said, responding to a question. The program is "pretty darn consistent," with "great kids in it. We've got a bunch of blue-collar kids, Midwest kids."

"We may not be the most talented in the country at any time, nor are we the worst. We are what we are, no

more, no less. We understand that," he said. "We know we have to compete and we have to do things above average to get to the point we want to be all the time."

That he would be asked such a question was a reflection of where the program is and the expectations for it. The regional appearance was Nebraska's seventh in the past eight seasons, the third in Anderson's four seasons as coach. The Cornhuskers won 40 games — they finished 42-17 — in each of those seven seasons and have had more victories than any other Big 12 school in the past decade.

They have won four Big 12 Tournament championships and three regular-season championships.

And interest in the program has packed Hawks Field at Haymarket Park. Average attendance at home

games this season was a record 4,864, breaking last season's record of 4,426. Their game against Creighton at Rosenblatt Stadium in mid-May drew 21,158, the largest of the collegiate season.

The total also exceeded attendance at six major league games that night, as the Cornhuskers defeated Creighton 4-1, to complete a three-game sweep of their intrastate rival.

Step back? Hardly. Nebraska has earned national respect. During a news conference on the day before the regional began, Miami coach Jim Morris complemented Anderson's program.

"To be honest, when I took the job 13 years ago at the University of Miami, I didn't even know what the University of Nebraska baseball program was," Morris said. "I knew they had a football team and heard they played Miami a couple of times, so I know we're hated because of that."

"But I didn't know anything about the team. And now to be able to come out here like we did last year and see the venue they play in and the fan support that they have, their fans are great."

After the Cornhusker football team played Miami in the Rose Bowl game after the 2001 season, Morris said he was leaving and heard Nebraska fans compliment not only the Hurricanes' football team but their baseball program as well. Miami has been to the College World Series 34 consecutive seasons.

"They were great after the (Rose Bowl) game," he said.

As fans were leaving Hawks Field following the Cornhuskers' loss to San Francisco, one, a youngster, shouted, enthusiastically, "Go Miami." An older fan, walking nearby, provided an alternate opinion, though without malice. "Go Manhattan," he said, "anybody but Miami."

Nebraska was out, this season. But there will be a next.

Losing as it did "just serves as a motivation factor," said Gerch, a sophomore. "Obviously, we thought we worked hard, but maybe it wasn't hard enough. We've got to go out in summer ball and then next fall we've got to make ourselves better baseball players all the way around." ■

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# BASEBALL NOTES

## DRAMATIC FINISH

Luke Gorsett, Nebraska's home run leader with 15, suffered from late-season back spasms and wasn't in the lineup in the regional. In fact, coach Mike Anderson didn't decide to include the junior outfielder from Denver, Colo., on the postseason roster until the deadline for submission.

Gorsett batted once as a pinch-hitter with two out and two on in the bottom of the ninth inning of the first game against Manhattan. Jake Opitz had singled with one out and Nick Jaros had followed with a single after Jake Mort flied out to the left fielder. Gorsett represented the tying run.

Manhattan left-hander Chris Cody said he tried to approach pitching to Gorsett the same way he would have approached Bryce Nimmo, for whom Gorsett batted.

"On the bus ride over here, I saw the kid next to me reading the paper and I saw the little side note, 'Gorsett Out,'" said Cody. "I knew that was one of their big guns," and the fact that he wasn't going to play "kind of helps your confidence a little bit. Then I saw him coming up."

"I just wanted to keep making quality pitches."

With a one-strike count, Gorsett drove a Cody pitch to center field.

## FAN FAIR

Cornhusker baseball fans have earned a reputation for treating visiting team fairly and with respect. Playing at Hawks Field at Haymarket Park in Lincoln "was everything I expected and more," said Cody, who is from Brewster, N.Y., a village of some 2,000 approximately 60 miles from New York City. "I thought the fans were great. I never heard anything bad out of their mouths."

"I toed the rubber in the first inning and I looked up. I could see fans screaming everything at me, nothing bad. They wanted to let me know there were there. They cheered on their players. It was awesome. It's hard to find something to compare it with."

## ALL-BIG 12

Gorsett was among five Cornhuskers who earned first-team all-conference honors. The others were: Brandon Buckman, Ryan Wehrle, Tony Watson and Brett Jensen.

Gorsett finished the season hitting .348 with 48 RBIs in addition to the 15 home runs. He was a semifinalist for the Dick Howser Award as the nation's top collegiate player.

Buckman, who shared first base on the first-team with Chance Wheelless of Texas, batted .339 with 14 home runs and a team-high 51 RBIs. Buckman hit two home runs in a game three times during the season, tops on the team. He also was a second-team Academic All-American. The senior from Monument, Colo., carried a 3.48 grade-point average in a civil engineering major.

Buckman continued what has become a trend. In the past eight seasons, Nebraska has had a first-team all-conference first baseman five times. He followed in the footsteps of Ken Harvey (1999), Dan Johnson (2000-01), Matt Hopper (2003) and Curtis Ledbetter (2005).

Wehrle led the team in hitting, with a .367 average, and extra-base hits, with 31 — eight of them home runs. The sophomore shortstop from Papillion, Neb., tied Gorsett for second on the team with 48 RBIs. He went 2-for-4 in the San Francisco game, his 29th multi-hit game of the season, best on the team and the Cornhuskers' best since 2002, when Jeff Leise (36) and Jed Morris (32) both did it.

Watson, who allowed only one earned run in 6.1 innings but took the loss against San Francisco, pitched 100.1 innings on the season, only the 11th player in Cornhusker history to pitch 100 or more. No other Nebraska pitcher worked more than 90



Luke Gorsett

innings during the season. The sophomore left-hander from Grimes, Iowa, finished 10-2 with a 2.78 ERA, best among the starters.

Jensen, a senior from Eagle Grove, Iowa, finished his Cornhusker career in second place on the all-time list for pitching appearances with 80. He pitched the final 1.2 innings against San Francisco without allowing a hit and striking out three to finish the season with a 2.56 ERA in 27 appearances.

Two Cornhuskers were included on the all-conference second team, junior Andrew Brown and sophomore Johnny Dorn. Brown batted .298 with nine home runs and 30 RBIs, while Dorn finished with a 9-4 record and 3.89 ERA and two complete games among his 14 starts.

In addition, four Cornhuskers earned all-conference honorable mention: second baseman Jake Opitz, catcher Jeff Christy, outfielder Nick Jaros and designated hitter Andy Gerch.

The first first-team selections matched the best in school history.

## GOOD-BYES

Buckman, Christy and Jensen were the Cornhuskers' only seniors. "They're incredible young men," Anderson said when asked to comment on those who would return next season. "But you're also talking about kids who may not be here because of the draft, too. So I always look at it that way."

Three Nebraska underclassmen were ranked among the top 200 draft-eligible players: Watson, Wehrle and pitcher Joba Chamberlain, who finished with a 6-5 record, 3.93 ERA and 102 strikeouts in 89.1 innings. Opponents batted only .255 against the junior right-hander from Lincoln.

The draft was slated for the week after the regional. "There are a number of kids who will leave this program," Anderson said after the San Francisco loss. "This is one of the most unique teams I've been on. I wish they would have gotten the result they desired. But I know they learned a lot from each other. They'll have life-long friendships. They'll have some incredible memories together."

Over the previous five seasons, 29 Cornhuskers had been drafted, including 12 in the first 10 rounds. Last season, four were selected in the first 10 rounds, with Alex Gordon second overall.



Sophomore lefty Tony Watson led the pitching staff with a 10-2 record and a 2.78 ERA.

## TOUGH TICKET

A measure of the program's success is reflected in the fact that attendance for the first-round regional game against Manhattan was 8,063 and yet that total didn't make the all-time top 10. The season's best attendance was also a school record — 8,757 were on hand for the second game of the mid-April, Big 12 series against Texas A&M, coached by former Cornhusker assistant Rob Childress. Sunday's game against A&M drew 8,415, which is ninth on the all-time list, while Friday night's game attracted 7,318.

The second game of the final regular-season series against Oklahoma drew 8,310, for 10th place on the all-time list, after the first game on Friday night drew 8,252. Attendance for the Oklahoma series was a school-record 25,175. The A&M series was a close second, 24,490.

The Cornhuskers also set a record for series attendance against a nonconference opponent in 2006, with 14,885 watching the home-opening sweep of Alabama in mid-March.

The regional game against San Francisco, on a Saturday afternoon, drew 7,144, the 36th time a crowd of 6,000 or more has watched Nebraska play at Hawks Field.

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Nebraska placed four players on the Big 12's 10th Anniversary team: first baseman Dan Johnson (2000-01), third baseman Alex Gordon (2004-05), utility player Matt Hopper (2000-03) and starting pitcher Shane Komine (2000-01). Voting for the team included fan participation.

Texas, of course, dominated the team. ■



# CROSSWORD TRIVIA

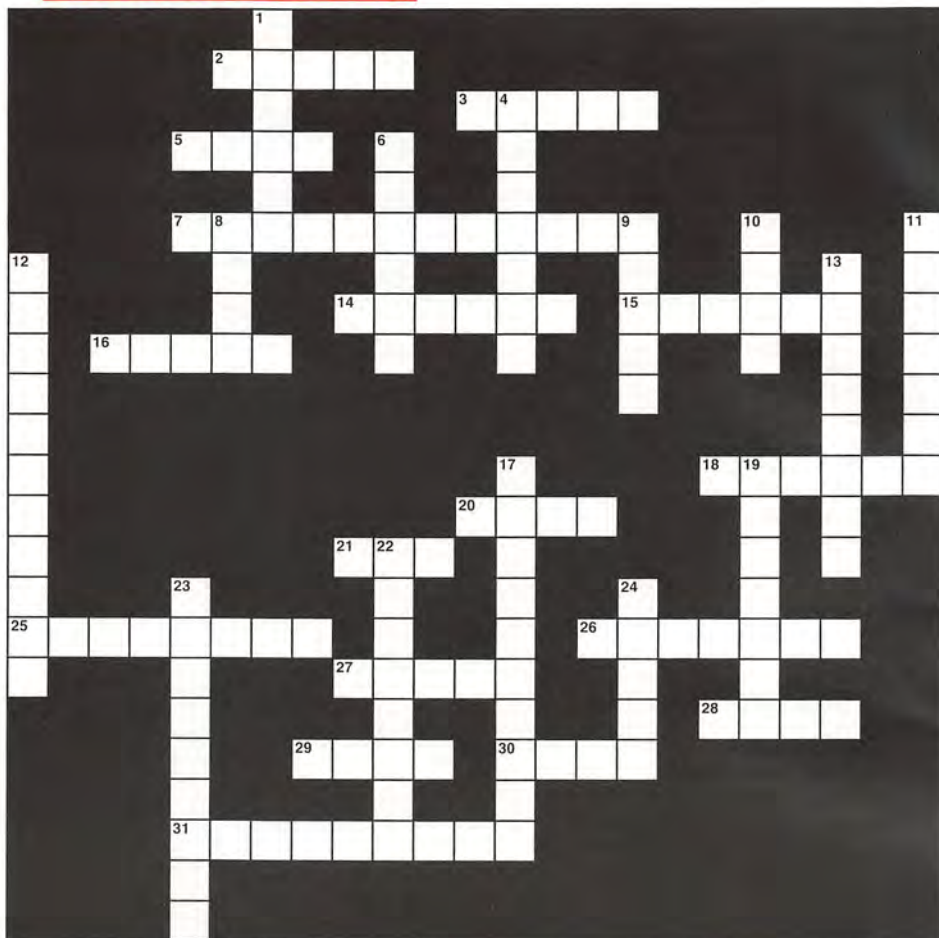
## ACROSS

- 2 Safeties coach
- 3 Leading receiver in 2005
- 5 Scored 2 touchdowns in Alamo Bowl
- 7 New opponent on 2008 NU schedule
- 14 Tight ends coach
- 15 Newest ex-Husker in College Hall of Fame
- 16 Defending national champion
- 18 Leading tackler in 2005
- 20 Wears No. 50
- 21 Network for NU-USC game
- 25 Linebackers coach
- 26 Turner Gill's current school
- 27 I-back from Texas
- 28 Radio play-by-play announcer
- 29 First punter chosen in 2006 NFL Draft
- 30 Sept. 23 opponent
- 31 Cornerbacks coach

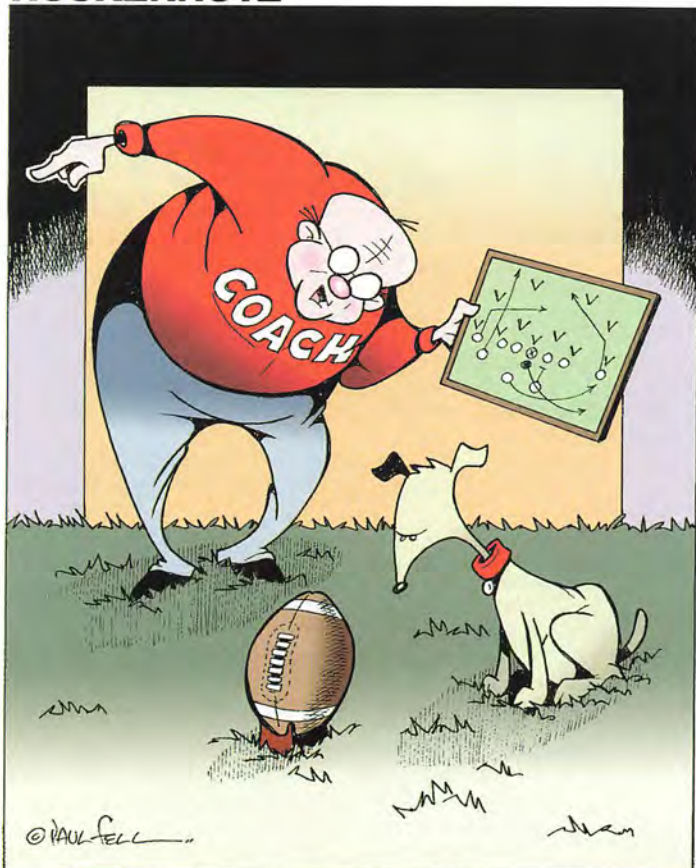
## DOWN

- 1 Freshman who had 6 sacks in 2005
- 4 Ex-Husker in 2006 Super Bowl
- 6 Opponent in Big 12 opener
- 8 Jay Norvell's alma mater
- 9 Zac Taylor's junior college teammate
- 10 Frank Solich's current school
- 11 Leading scorer in 2005
- 12 Bill Callahan's college position
- 13 Assisted on tackle on final play of Alamo Bowl
- 17 Adam Carriker's home state
- 19 Bill Callahan's hometown
- 22 First Husker selected in 2006 NFL Draft
- 23 Stadium for 2006 Big 12 Championship
- 24 I-back from California

Answers in August issue



## HUSKERNUTZ



IVAN AND ROSCOE PREPARE FOR THE START OF THE 2006 HUSKER GRIDIRON CAMPAIGN.

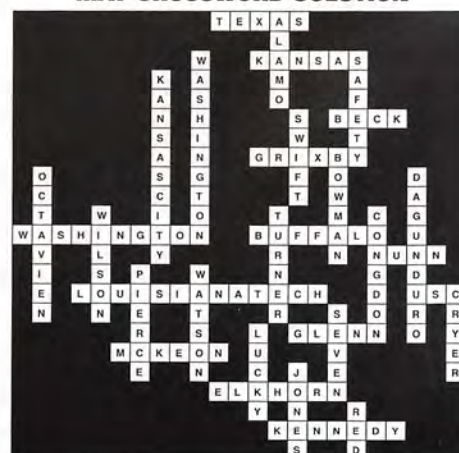
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## MAY CROSSWORD SOLUTION





## October Critical

*Nebraska's other games on the 2006 schedule will be just as important as the 'big two'*



**Mike BABCOCK**

MAYBE YOU SHARE this opinion, and even if you don't, you've probably heard it offered during discussions of the Nebraska football team's prospects for 2006. "Call me crazy," someone will say. "But the Cornhuskers are going to beat either Southern California or Texas."

Last September, after Nebraska's 7-6 victory against Pittsburgh, the same person might have been lamenting the fact that the 2006 schedule included the trip to Los Angeles. If a blocked field goal on the final play was needed to beat Pittsburgh, what was going to happen at USC?

Obviously, there was no correlation between the two events, separated as they were by one day short of a year. But some can't enjoy the present for fear of what might happen in the future.

In any case, at that point, Southern California appeared headed for an unprecedented third consecutive national championship, and Texas had yet to shake its nemesis, Oklahoma. So the 2006 game at USC was foremost in the minds of Nebraska fans, who will descend on the Los Angeles Coliseum in mid-September the way they descended on Notre Dame Stadium in 2000. Got a ticket yet?

The Texas game has added significance now because the Longhorns are the defending national champions. That game would have been more significant, anyway, because of its conference implications. But playing a high-profile opponent such as USC will provide coach Bill Callahan's developing program an opportunity for valuable exposure in recruiting-rich southern California. And where better to find athletes suited to the West Coast offense than on the West Coast?

Both are important, and winning either — or both — would represent another step in the process of Callahan's restoring the order. In the short term, however, in the context of the 2006 season, Nebraska's must-win games are those against Big 12 North opponents, Iowa State and Kansas State in particular. If the Cornhuskers are to return to dominance, they have to begin in their own backyard.

Consider the golf maxim: Drive for show and putt for dough. If USC and Texas are drives, then Iowa State and Kansas State are putts, which Nebraska has to sink to finish in the money.

Perhaps Callahan should consult baseball Hall of Famer Reggie Jackson in planning for the 2006 season. Jackson was "Mr. October" because of his clutch World Series performances with the Oakland A's and New York Yankees. And Callahan needs to be the coaching equivalent.

October is critical for the Cornhuskers. Whether or not they get to the conference title game for the first time since 1999 could be determined by Halloween. They play three Big 12 road games plus Texas in October, beginning with Iowa State and Kansas State and finishing with Oklahoma State.

The importance of the Iowa State game should be obvious. Those who aren't inclined to pick Nebraska as the North Division favorite will pick the Cyclones instead. They've got their own version of Zac Taylor in junior Bret Meyer, who was sacked one more time than Taylor last season. And they've got Nebraska in Ames, where the Cornhuskers haven't won since the 2000 season.

A week later, Nebraska travels to Manhattan, Kan., where it hasn't won since 1996. The last two times the Cornhuskers have played there, they've lost by a combined 94-34. Add the subplots of a new coach, Ron Prince, and the de-commitment of a prize quarterback recruit, Josh Freeman, and you've got the makings of must-see drama, even though Kansas State isn't going to be very good.

Every conference game is important, to be sure. But Nebraska needs to highlight Oct. 14 in purple. A loss at Manhattan and the Husker Nation will sink into even greater depression than the one that followed last season's 27-25 victory against the Wildcats at Memorial Stadium.

Yes, Nebraska won, to snap a frustrating, three-game losing streak. But as was the case early in the season — the Pittsburgh game again is the best example — many Cornhusker fans seem to have adopted a style-point mentality toward victories. Hey, folks, there's no such thing as an unsatisfying victory.

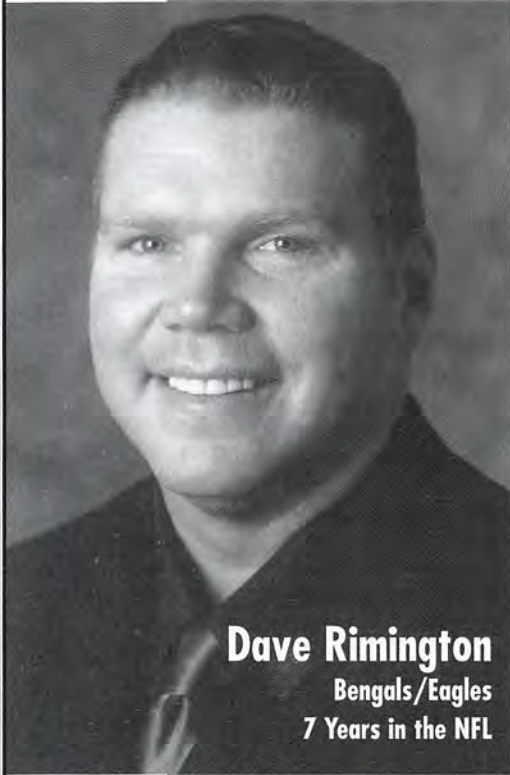
Optimism about 2006 is justified, no question, as long as Taylor stays healthy. Callahan's tireless recruiting efforts have elevated the talent level, which, in turn, has produced more competition and more depth. Specifically, the defense is solid enough in the front seven to cover for inexperience and lack of depth in the secondary, and the offense will be better, not just because it has to be but also because the players are more familiar with the system. Plus, the line is improving and deeper.

For some, the optimism is based on two games — 30-3 at Colorado and 32-28 against Michigan in the Alamo Bowl. But the other six victories were just as important, if not more so. Had one or two of those gone the other way, Nebraska wouldn't have gotten the Alamo Bowl bid. Two games didn't define 2005 and two games won't define 2006. To say the Cornhuskers will beat USC or Texas is based on the assumption they will win most if not all of their other games. And that can't be assumed. ■



**Bill Callahan's Nebraska teams are 2-6 in Big 12 road games.**





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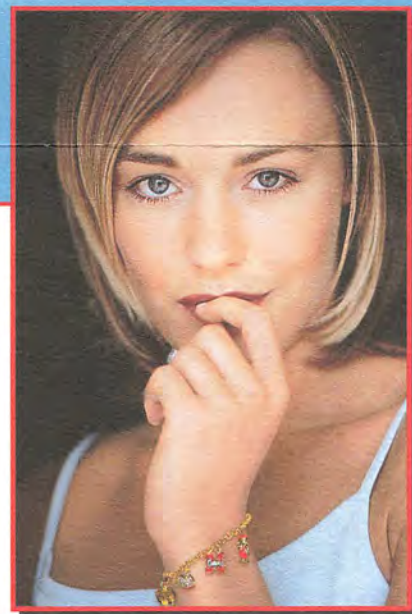


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*(continued from previous page)*

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